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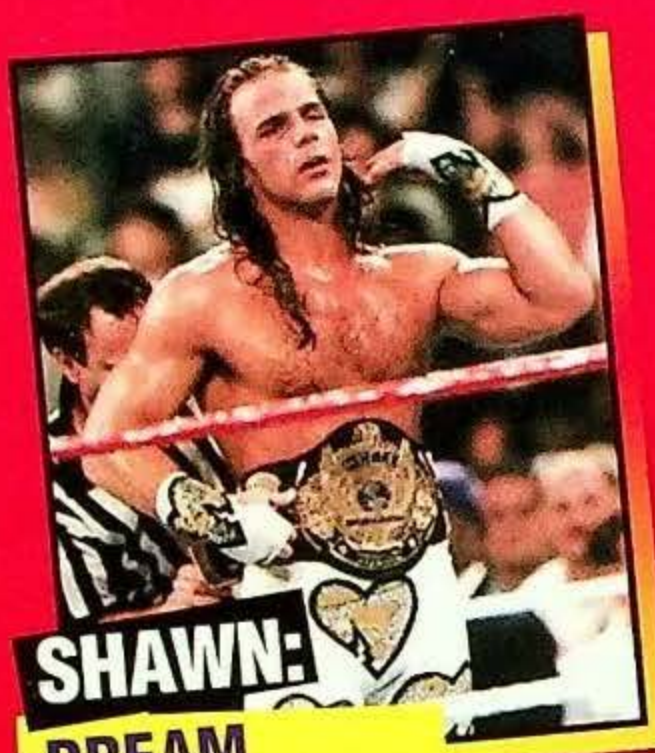

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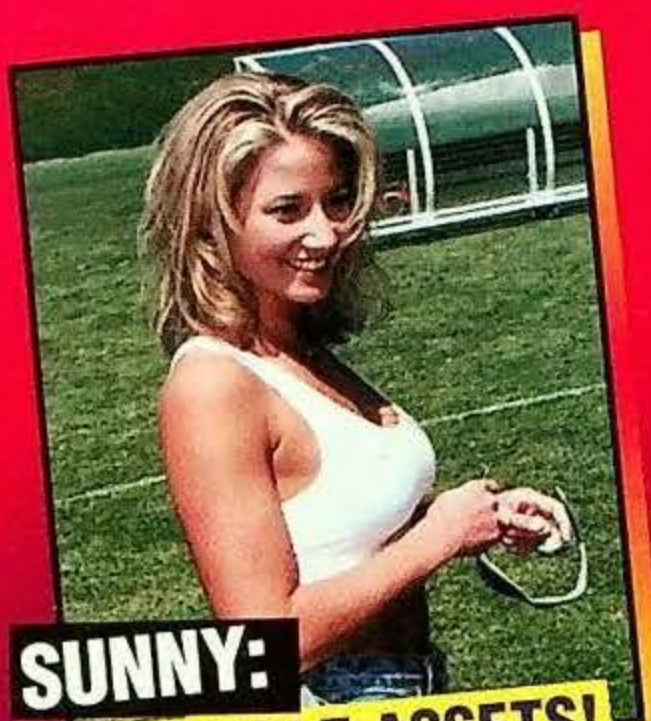

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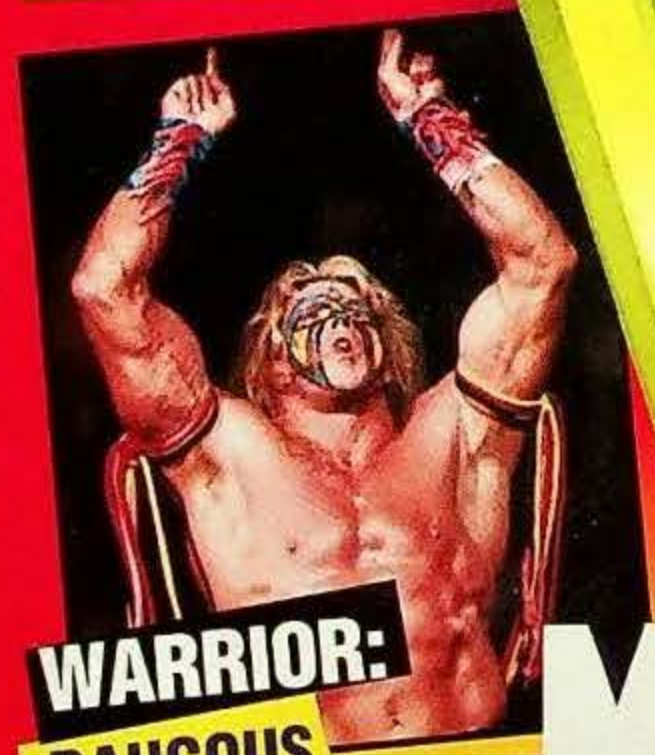

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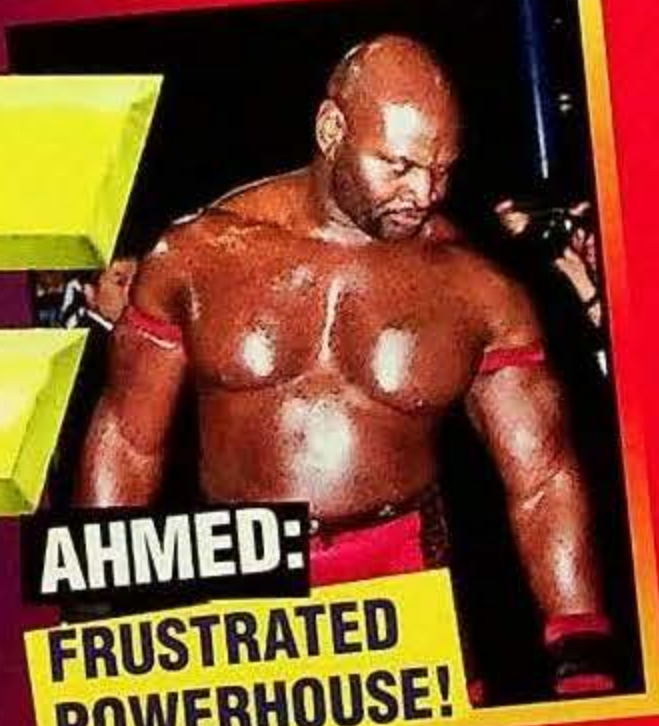

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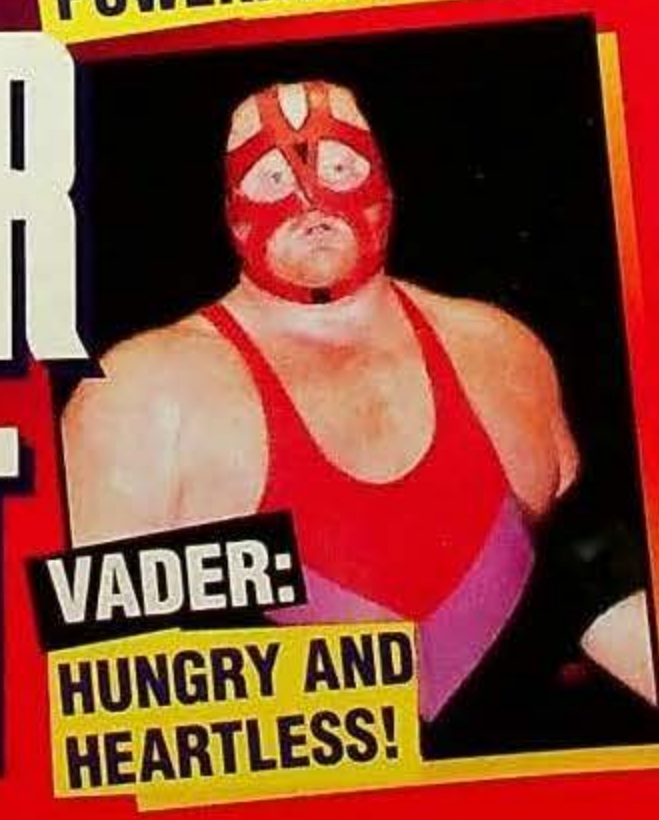

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SEPTEMBER 1996

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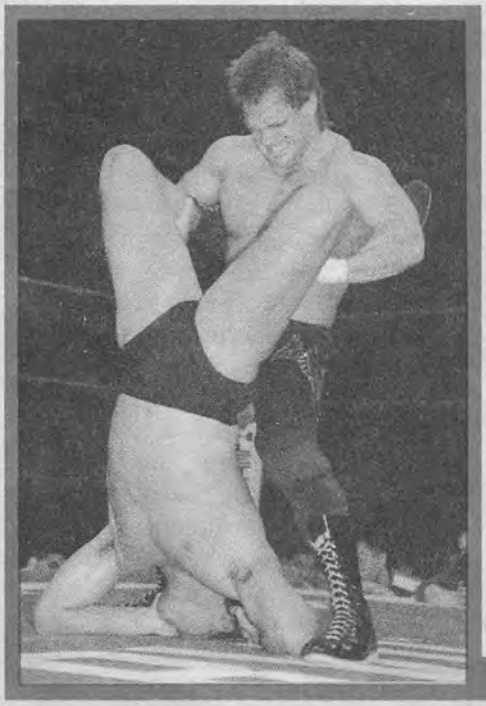

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YOUR Letters

GIANT ACCOMPLISHMENT

I can't believe The Giant defeated Ric Flair to win the WCW World title. Either the "Nature Boy" has really lost his touch or The Giant is the greatest big man to ever step over the top rope and into the ring. I realize Flair may just be a shell of his former self, but he never had trouble with a rookie the way he did with The Giant. Flair used to take beginners to school in the ring.

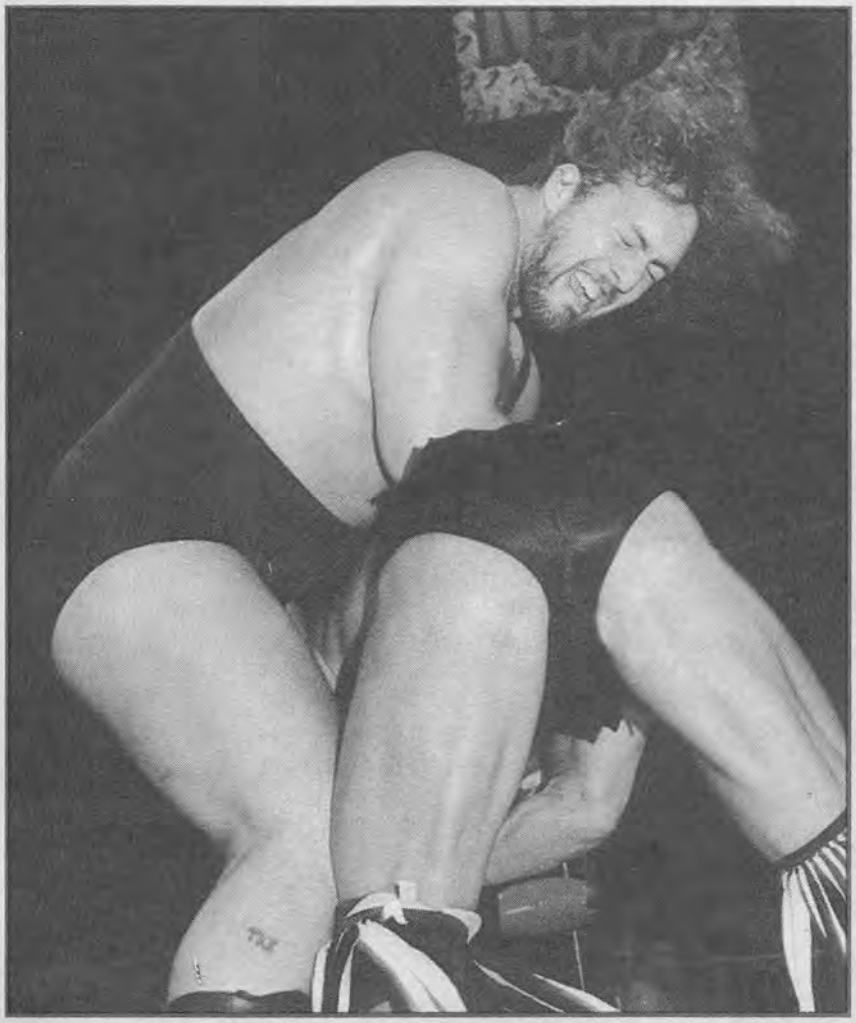
If The Giant can win the WCW World championship in just his first year of wrestling, just imagine what he'll be able to do when he gets more experience. He'll be phenomenal! The Giant *is* the future of wrestling.

ANGELA SCHWARTZ
Winston-Salem, NC

Will anyone in WCW be able to stop The Giant? I was amazed when he defeated Ric Flair. I couldn't believe what he reduced Ric Flair to in the ring. He just threw him to the mat like a rag doll and pinned him.

Now that The Giant has the World belt, I'm sure Hulk Hogan will try to win it from him, but I think that might be a big mistake. I think it would be in Hogan's best interests to befriend Giant before he also falls prey to this colossal champion. If Giant could destroy the great Flair in just minutes, I'm afraid of what he could do to Hogan. The Giant may be the end of Hogan's illustrious career. Giant definitely has the power and the ability, and, now, he even has the gold.

SAMUEL CANERS
Fleetwood, PA



The fact that The Giant has been able to dominate so many opponents in WCW in his first year is impressive enough, but many of our readers were amazed that the rookie was able to beat Ric Flair for the WCW World belt so easily.

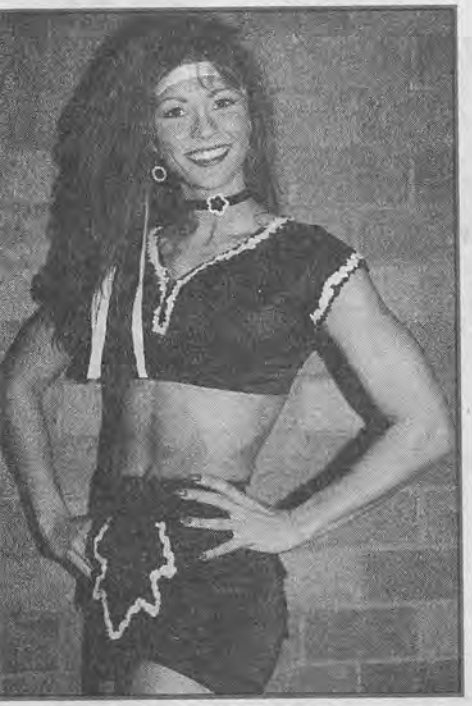
FEMALE REVOLUTION

It's about time the editors of THE WRESTLER devoted a large portion of an issue to the women of wrestling ("Babes In Boyland," July 1996). There are probably more women in prominent positions in the sport today than there ever have been. I think it's great that women like Sunny, Woman, Kimberly, and Elizabeth are getting the exposure they deserve. These women probably had to work harder than most of their male counterparts—men like Jim Cornette—to reach the level of success they have reached today.

These women, along with the dozens of other women that you didn't feature, like Beulah McGillicutty, Miss Patricia, Francine, and others, deserve just as much credit for their successes. They give young girls positive role models to look up to. It doesn't really

matter that some of them use questionable tactics; just the fact that they've gotten so far is a major accomplishment.

MARGIE MATHER
Brentwood, CA



"Booty Babe" Kimberly is one of the many women enjoying a lot of success in wrestling in 1996. Reader Margie Mather was happy to see us feature some of the women of wrestling prominently in our July issue.

TRASH TALK

What was Madusa thinking when she threw the WWF World Women's belt in the trash and defected to WCW last year? I bet she thought she would get the chance to face better competition, even though WCW has neither a women's belt nor a women's division. I also bet it's safe to say Madusa never thought she'd be facing *manager* Col. Robert Parker in mixed matches. Those matches have done little to showcase her athletic abilities. It's a shame that one of the top female competitors in the world is now reduced to wrestling in matches during which I go to the fridge for a snack.

When Madusa threw the WWF belt in the trash, little did she realize she trashed her career right along with it.

ROBERT GARIPPA
Brooklyn, NY

REVENGE IS SWEET

I am glad that Elizabeth is finally unleashing her wrath on "Macho Man" Randy Savage. I think she did the right thing by siding with

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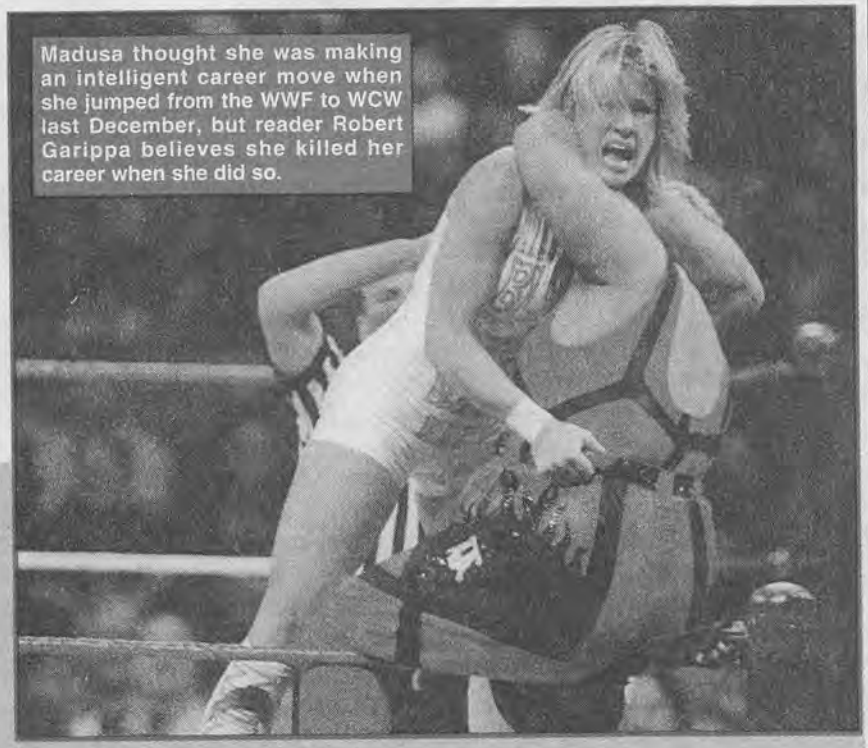

Madusa thought she was making an intelligent career move when she jumped from the WWF to WCW last December, but reader Robert Garippa believes she killed her career when she did so.

The Wrestler

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COVER DESIGN:
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The Wrestler, September 1996, (ISSN: 1052-0899) is published monthly, with an additional issue in December, by London Publishing Co., 7002 W. Butler Pike, Ambler, PA 19002. Second-class postage paid at Ambler, PA 19002 and additional post offices. Postmaster: Send change of address notices to: The Wrestler, P.O. Box 910, Fort Washington, PA 19034. Single copy price $3.50 ($4.50 in Canada, £2.65 in U.K.). Subscription price $29.20 for 13 issues in the U.S., $39.60 in remaining countries. Not responsible for the loss or non-return of unsolicited articles or photographs, which will not be returned unless accompanied by a self-addressed envelope bearing the proper amount of postage.

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Printed in U.S.A.

WHAT'S Happening

By Bill Apter

CALL **GOLDUST** WHATEVER weird names you want, but you have to admit that he has a lot of guts. After he seriously injured his left leg while wrestling **Razor Ramon** in Germany in April, it seemed doubtful he would be able to defend his Intercontinental title against **The Ultimate Warrior** just a week later at In Your House VII. Things looked even more bleak on the night of the match when Goldust slipped in a puddle of water after fleeing from Warrior in the locker room area.

Goldust is lucky he still has that WWF Intercontinental belt around his waist. Despite the fact that he had a badly injured leg, Goldust escaped his In Your House VII match with a countout loss to The Ultimate Warrior.

But Goldust still showed up for the match, even though he was limping noticeably and in obvious pain. After several minutes of slipping out of the ring to get away from Warrior, Goldust took a loss by countout and escaped with his title when Warrior clotheslined him over the top rope.

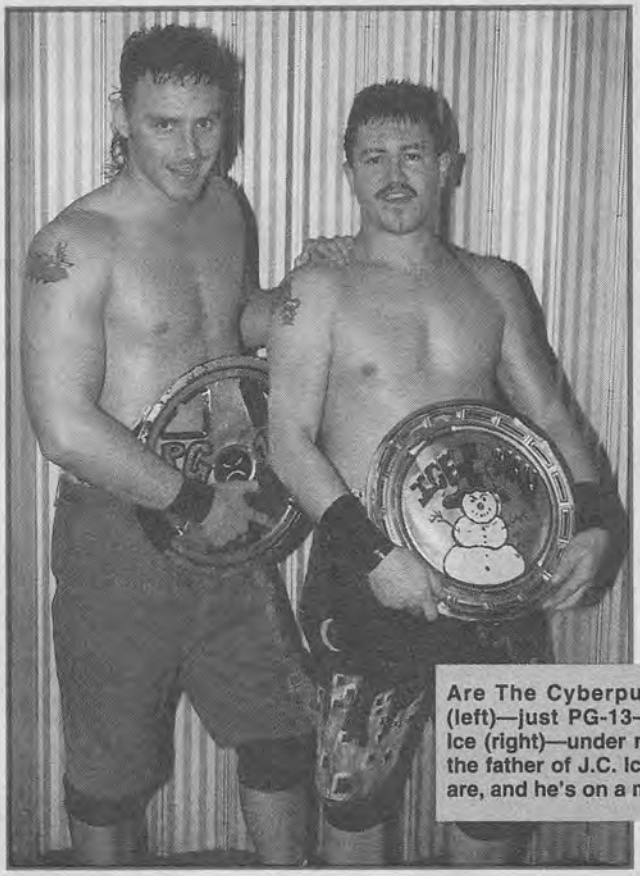
Marlena, Goldust's "director," told me she was very pleased with her man's performance that night. "The scene began with the uncertainty of the king losing his throne," she explained. "Cut to the chase. The psychological ploy pays off. Pan to a very frustrated Ultimate Warrior, who is now seen as just another peon before our leader. As we fade to black, we see gold still around the waist of the greatest hero our world has known. Roll the credits! Greatest champion ever: Goldust. Most magnificent director ever: Marlena. Most frustrated, washed-up gladiator ever: The Ultimate Warrior!"

Harvey Wippleman has been preparing a comprehensive report on the officiating in the WWF for WWF President **Gorilla Monsoon**. He says it's atrocious. He has also reportedly offered to manage **Tekno Team 2000** ... Rumors persist that

"Mr. Perfect" Curt Hennig feuded with Shawn Michaels in the WWF in 1993, and they might soon clash in the ring again. Hennig has been working as a broadcaster while his back heals, but some say he's ready to make a comeback.

"Mr. Perfect" Curt Hennig will return to the ring soon to challenge **Shawn Michaels** for Shawn's WWF World belt. Hennig refused comment when I asked him about it, but I noticed he was scouting a Michaels-**Hunter Hearst Helmsley** match recently.

Shinya Hashimoto pulled off a major victory on April 29 when he won the IWGP heavyweight title from **Nobuhiko Takada** ... **Bad Attitude** now holds the NWA U.S. tag team title by virtue of a win over **The Lost Boys** ... Century Wrestling Alliance manager



Are The Cyberpunks—Fire and Ice (left)—just PG-13—Wolfie D and J.C. Ice (right)—under masks? Bill Dundee, the father of J.C. Ice, is convinced they are, and he's on a mission to prove it!

Solomon Horowitz has signed **Big Daddy Mac** to a contract.

Why, I ask, is **Big Van Vader** appearing on USWA cards as a fan favorite? "Me and that kid **Brian Christopher** have been talking for years," he said. "He needed some help fighting **Jeff Jarrett**, **Mabel**, and **Mo**. Hell, it was a kick to help him out. We kicked some butt!" And what about hearing the cheers of the fans for a change? "**Jerry Lawler** is right," Vader said. "People here in Tennessee have brains. They're not like all those idiot WWF fans. Hey, it felt good that they appreciate that Vader time is here!"

Bill Dundee is still trying to prove to USWA officials that the tag team champions of that federation, **The Cyberpunks**, are indeed **Wolfie D** and **J.C. Ice** under masks. Wolfie and J.C. dropped a loser-leaves-the-USWA match to **Tommy Rich** and **Doug Gilbert** in March. If Dundee can prove his point by unmasking them, they will be kicked out of the USWA. "Everyone knows it's them!" an angry Dundee said. "J.C. Ice is my own son! Don't you think I'd know him even if he is wearing a mask?!"

"Until he can give me real proof by unmasking them, they get to stay," USWA matchmaker **Randy Hales** told me.

Since **Koko B. Ware** was able

(Continued on page 70)

Steve Anderson's View

No Holds Barred

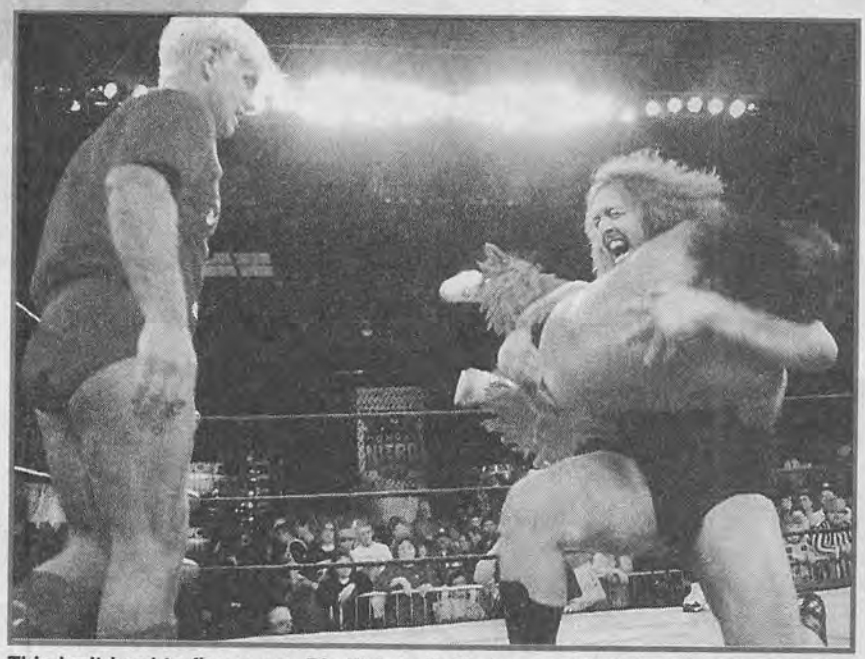
with Steve Anderson

CONFUSED BY THE chaos? Baffled by the battles? Questioning the quandary? Most observers of WCW are having trouble keeping track of all the dysfunctional relationships, even if they do have a scorecard. Friends may be friends, but friends of friends are another story. The line between rulebreaker and fan favorite is more blurry than it has ever been. For that purpose, the crack research staff of "No Holds Barred" (i.e. me) has come up with the following: "The 'No Holds Barred' Guide To WCW Interpersonal Relationships."

Let's start at the top.

The Giant, the new WCW World champion, had allied himself with Kevin Sullivan, but he broke away after a minor misunderstanding. He is now managed by Jimmy Hart, who is a business ally of Sullivan and part-time adviser of the man The Giant defeated for the crown, Ric Flair. But Flair and Giant actually teamed just weeks after The Giant choke-slammed Flair's best friend, Arn Anderson, and Sullivan. And those choke-slams took place after a Flair-Giant match.

Ric Flair's allies include Elizabeth (who was once married to his top foe, Randy Savage), Jimmy Hart (who now manages the man who beat him for world title number 12), Kevin Sullivan (who hates Flair's fellow Horseman Chris Benoit), Arn Anderson (who had a faux feud with the "Nature Boy" last summer), and (at least at Uncensored) Lex Luger.



This isn't hard to figure out: Ric Flair is thrilled to see his friend The Giant driving his knee into the back of his arch-rival, Randy Savage. But The Giant is no longer Flair's pal, despite the fact that they have mutual allies.

Lex Luger's only real friend in WCW right now is Sting ... I think. Hulk Hogan hates him. Savage doesn't trust him. Jimmy Hart briefly managed him. But this sometimes-hated man teamed with the popular Sting to win the World tag team title in January, and they still have the belts. Hart aided in that title victory and the one in which Luger won the TV belt. And when Luger wrestled Flair for the World belt on *Nitro* in April, there was Jimmy Hart—in *Flair's* corner.

Sting is trying to get along with everyone, but he has even had his run-ins with both Hogan and Savage. He attempted to team with The Giant one night in April, but that didn't work, because The Giant turned against him (one week after turning against two of Sting's enemies, Sullivan and Anderson). The Giant's turn against Sting was orchestrated by Hart.

(Continued on page 72)

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Biased:

By Andy Rodriguez

WHEN MADUSA CELEBRATED her arrival in WCW last December by tossing the WWF Women's belt in a trash can, it appeared she was striking yet another blow for women's wrestling. Well, she's been striking blows all right, squarely at the head of Col. Rob Parker. One suspects that is not what Madusa had in mind when she switched federations.

For Madusa, WCW was supposed to be the place where she'd finally show the world she could do it all: be a great wrestler or a great manager ... or both.

The first thing she did, though, was get herself tangled up in this ridiculous feud with Parker. It definitely is not a forum that makes her look good. One problem is that the people who run WCW don't care much about women's wrestling. They're more focused on beating the WWF in TV ratings wars. They don't see any hurry to create an environment in which Madusa can thrive.

So why did she make the switch? She thought the people who run the WWF didn't give her the share of the spotlight she deserved, so she set out for new ground and chucked a nice, shiny belt in the garbage.

Truth is, no wrestling organization in the U.S. is going to give Madusa the respect she deserves or thinks she deserves. When she competed as a wrestler and kickboxer in Japan and Southeast Asia, she was regarded as a serious athlete. People didn't come out to watch her parade around in a bikini or beat up on a cowardly manager. They came to see her fight.

Here, she rarely receives that opportunity. Many fans admire her athletic skills, but most still expect to see her storming around at ringside wearing an evening gown or a miniskirt.

All the promoters have convinced themselves that this is what the fans want from women associated with the sport. They don't want to see Madusa vs. Bull Nakano in a steel cage—they'd rather see Woman vs. Elizabeth in a battle for Ric Flair.

The promoters are on-target here. When women's wrestling is presented as serious competition, as it was in the LPWA a few years back, it does well for a while, probably more out of curiosity than true interest. Then everybody stops paying attention. Everybody enjoys going back to the way it was. Sunny flashing her butt as a distraction—yeah, that's the ticket.

No doubt Madusa recognizes this state of affairs, but how far does she want to go toward changing it? Madusa never asked to be a savior of women's wrestling. That title was thrust upon her by well-meaning admirers. She only asked to be allowed to be herself. Will we let her?

We'll have a harder time doing it if she insists on contesting feuds with people like Parker. Madusa has the option to walk out on this, but she persists. She enjoys demonstrating she has the ability to defeat a man of Parker's skills. After all, he once had a credible career in the ring.

Madusa

But Madusa most likely is doing too well financially to consider that option. Better to look slightly ridiculous in WCW than try making it on the independent circuit. Right now, WCW is the hot place to be, where "the big boys play." Why not stick around to see if they give the "big girls" a chance?

Madusa will get her chances. She will probably start managing soon. She has a brilliant mind for strategy. Any number of men would benefit from her expertise. Expect her to be carrying somebody's title belt to ringside soon.

Maybe there's room for her as a commentator, though that has never been her strong suit. She thirsts to be part of the action.

Most of all, though, she wants to wrestle. It took her years to mold herself into a champion athlete, and she is justifiably proud. I hope WCW will begin to import some talented women and give Madusa the opportunity to shine. But that's a big hope.

When Alundra Blayze became Madusa again, she gave us the promise of a new beginning—for herself and for women's wrestling. But it's a small beginning. Let her put a few more knots in Parker's head. Let's enjoy watching her give a bad man his comeuppance. But let's expect the best from her.

That's what she expects from herself. □

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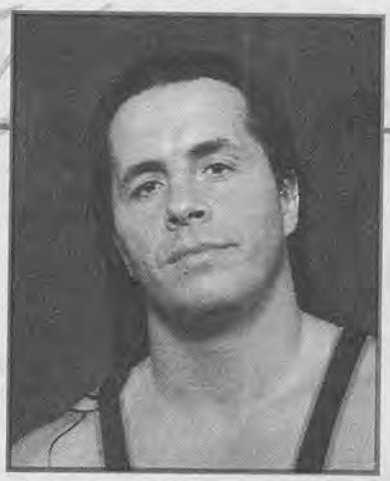
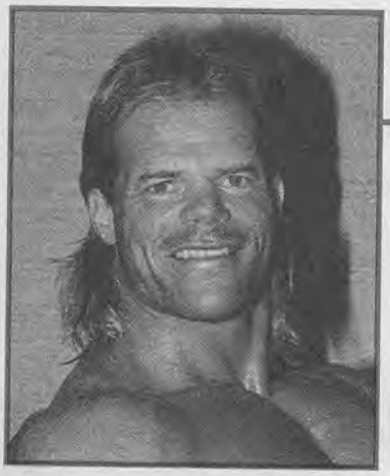
THUMBS UP

Thumbs Up to The Giant. He did what Andre the Giant couldn't ... win a world title without outside help. And he didn't try to sell the belt after winning it, either. The Giant became the first rookie in wrestling history to win a world heavyweight title when he beat Ric Flair for the WCW belt on April 22. The Giant, who never gave up on himself after getting humbled by Hulk Hogan, worked his way out of a figure-four and choke-slammed Flair for the win. The move not only shook the building, it shook the wrestling world, which now must acknowledge that The Giant will be one of the hottest stars of the future ... and the present.



Thumbs Up to Bret Hart. "The Hitman's" announcement that he would take time off after WrestleMania XII was bad news for the sport, which needs all the superstars it can get. Equally good news was Hart's return to the ring less than two weeks after his loss of the WWF World title. He joined the federation on its tour of Germany and scored impressive victories over Hunter Hearst Helmsley, Steve Austin, and Owen Hart. His quest for a fourth WWF title has begun in earnest, and although everyone wants The Ultimate Warrior to challenge Shawn Michaels, we think Hart's as great a challenger as anyone. The WWF still needs him.



Thumbs Up to Lex Luger. We're just as sick of the "Whose side are you on?" debate about Luger as you are, but we're starting to see Luger in a new light. He has been telling Sting for months that he *is* trustworthy, and maybe he's telling the truth. Luger was right by the "Stinger's" side in their battles with The Giant and Ric Flair and has even taken on The Giant in singles competition. He looks a true fan favorite to us and seems to be doing just as well without Jimmy Hart in his corner as he did with him. Apparently, he wasn't kidding when he said he wanted nothing to do with The Four Horsemen or the Dungeon of Doom. Keep it up, Lex!

Thumbs Up to Gorilla Monsoon. And while we're on the subject of congratulating officials, here's some encouragement for the WWF president, who has shown admirable control recently by refusing to make reflex judgments on important issues. First, he refused to ban Mankind's finishing move, then he refused the Godwinns' request to have Sunny, manager of The Bodydonnas, banned from ringside. Perhaps Monsoon realizes as we do that Sunny flashing her derriere, while certainly questionable, is not exactly blatant interference. It's not Sunny's fault that Phineas Godwinn can't control himself.

THUMBS Down

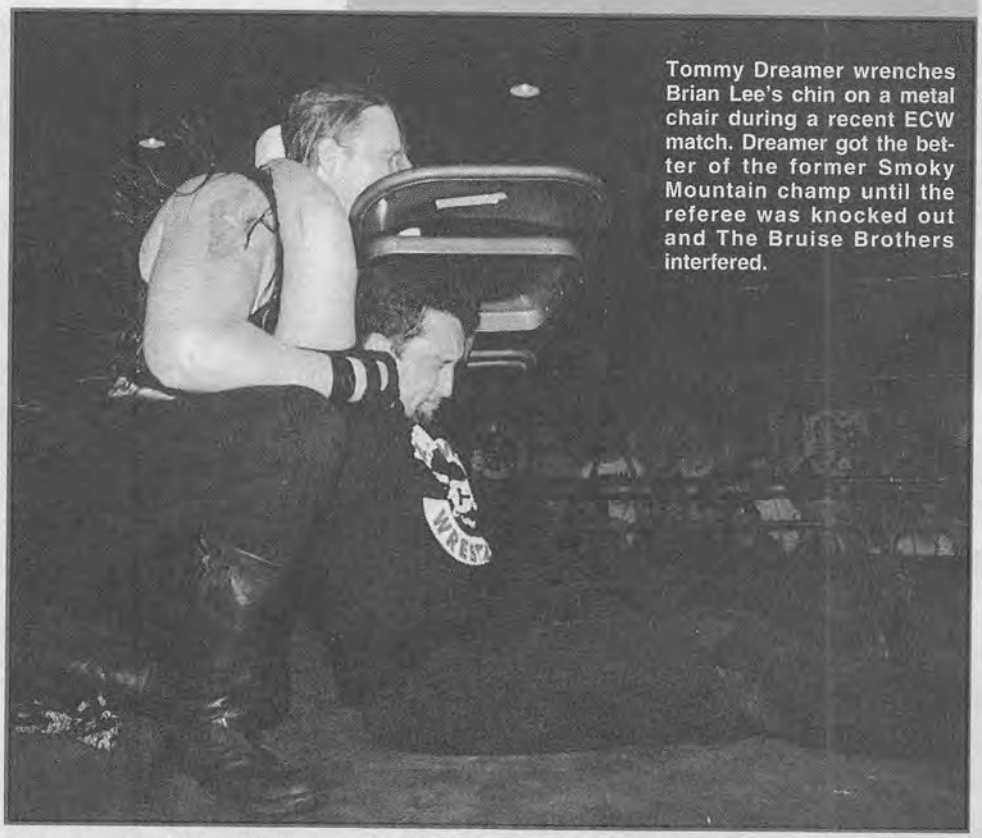
Thumbs Down to Jim Cornette. Davey Boy Smith's accusations that Shawn Michaels propositioned his wife, Diana, are without basis and uncalled for, in addition to being an obvious conspiracy between Smith and manager Cornette. Although we're not saying that handsome athletes never act inappropriately toward women, the point is there's no evidence linking Michaels to Diana Smith. This whole plot sounds like Cornette's doing to us. Can't you just picture him saying, "Hey, Davey Boy, I've got a plan for getting us a title shot with Michaels. We'll say this and he'll definitely want to take you on in the ring!" It's absolutely ridiculous!

Thumbs Down to Diesel. Diesel's appalling behavior prior to his departure from the WWF took a sickening turn at In Your House VII when "Big Daddy Cool" approached wrestling legend Mad Dog Vachon, who was merely a spectator. Diesel took Vachon's prosthetic foot and tried to attack Shawn Michaels with it. You have to wonder what would drive a man to do such a sick thing. If Diesel's trying to make WWF fans happy about his leaving for WCW, he couldn't have done a better job. There's obviously something wrong with the former champion. Maybe Hulk Hogan or Sting will knock some sense into him.

Thumbs Down to Jeff Jarrett. This "Double-J" plummeted to the depths of selfishness when he took advantage of some questionable actions by referee Frank Morell in his USWA heavyweight title match with Jerry Lawler on April 20. As Morell clutched his chest during the match, Lawler went over to him to see if he was having a heart attack. That gave Jarrett the opportunity to roll Lawler up from behind and win the USWA belt. Morell miraculously "recovered" and made the three-count. Now, it seems, we can't even respect Jarrett for the way he wrestles in Memphis. He *and* Morell should both be ashamed of themselves!

Thumbs Down to Brian Lee. Blind faith isn't a very good idea when you've put your faith in a nefarious no-good like Raven. Brian Lee, who never needed Tammy Fytch more than he needs her now, walked right into Raven's lair upon coming to ECW. Now, instead of trying to rebuild his own career, Lee is doing Raven's dirty work in his ongoing feud with Tommy Dreamer. Talk about bad judgment. Lee's victories over Dreamer would be noteworthy if he was doing it for himself. But Raven's agenda is Lee's agenda, and as long as that lasts, there's little hope for this former star.

CORRESPONDENTS Reports



Tommy Dreamer wrenches Brian Lee's chin on a metal chair during a recent ECW match. Dreamer got the better of the former Smoky Mountain champ until the referee was knocked out and The Bruise Brothers interfered.

Philadelphia, PA *(Correspondent—Joe Vincent):* Tommy Dreamer, it seems, can never make it through an entire ECW card without having to deal with heavyweight champion Raven or one of his hired hands. On this night at the ECW Arena, he had to face former Smoky Mountain heavyweight champion Brian Lee, whom Raven recently brought to ECW.

The fans chanted some nasty things at Lee before the bout, and the chants seemed to unnerve him, and he wasted no time in initiating his attack. But Dreamer was ready for him. He knocked Lee out of the ring and went out after him. But Lee fought back hard and tossed Dreamer into the crowd, then went into the crowd himself.

The brawl was on! The two men traded punches amongst the fans, and before long, Lee looked dazed. Dreamer took advantage of his predicament and climbed up to the arena's balcony and leaped down onto Lee, stunning him even more.

Within a few minutes, Lee began battering Dreamer again. Twice he drove a guard railing into Dreamer's back. Once the two were back in the ring, Lee was able to duck a Dreamer clothesline, but in the process, he accidentally knocked out the referee. That gave The Bruise Brothers a chance to interfere. Both hit Dreamer with chairs, but when Lee covered Dreamer, he kicked out before the count of three. After the referee was knocked out again, the Bruises and Lee hit Dreamer with a cinderblock. When the referee woke up, he made the three-count on Dreamer.

In other bouts: El Puerto Ricano wrestled to a no-contest with Super Nova ... Mikey Whipwreck pinned Billy Black ... The Pit Bulls wrestled Bubba Ray & D-Von Dudley to a no-contest ... Taz defeated Devon Storm by countout ... Axl Rotten pinned Little Guido ... The Sandman & 2 Cold Scorpio defeated The Bruise Brothers ... Sabu beat Rob Van Dam ... ECW heavyweight champ Raven pinned Shane Douglas.

Dusseldorf, Germany *(Correspondent—Wilhelm Streuman):* The fans didn't know what to expect from Goldust when he came to the ring for his match with one of his more bitter rivals, Razor Ramon. The WWF Intercontinental champ went through some of his usual bizarre prematch gestures

(Continued on page 74)

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YOU Asked Us . . .

Public Enemy's Rocco Rock moonsaults Nasty Boy Jerry Sags through a table. Rock says he and Grunge don't worry much about the possibility of suffering serious injuries during their matches.

Q: "I have a question for Public Enemy—Rocco Rock and Johnny Grunge: Do your friends and families ever worry about you getting seriously injured in some of your brutal matches?" —Bonnie Savage, Lorimor, IA

A: "Me and Johnny ain't worried about that stuff!" said Rocco Rock. "We wrestle the way we want every time and figure out what hurts later. We been to the hospital so many times that we stopped counting. All we try to do is give out more than we take in every match, but we always end up takin' a lot of shots, too. Everybody who knows us knows it's waste of time to try to change us. Too late for that. Sometimes me and Johnny will sit around and compare all the injuries we have. You know, to see who has the most. Those lists are always really long. The way we see it, if you ain't hurt after a match, you ain't had a real match. But we don't plan on lettin' nobody put us out for a long time—especially not them two Nasty Girls!"

• • •

Q: "This is a question for Tommy Dreamer: Why won't you let your feud with Raven in ECW die already? You guys have been tearing each other apart for longer than a year now!"—Randall Turner, Glenolden, PA

A: "I think that's a question you should be asking Raven," responded Dreamer. "I'm not sure he's smart enough to answer it, though. I think he gets little dumber with every beating I give him. Every time I wrap a table or a frying pan around his head, a few more of his demented brain cells die. This thing between me and him could have been over a long time ago if Raven was a real man. If he agreed to settle this with me man-to-man, just me and him and all the tables and chairs we can get our hands on, it *would* be over. That's just not the way he works. In the back of his screwed-up mind, he *knows* he can't beat me that way. If he was so tough, why does he need the help of Stevie Richards, that stupid freak The Blue Meanie, The Bruise Brothers, and Brian Lee? You know something: I don't care how many guys he brings to ECW. I'll be the only one standing when this thing finally ends!"

• • •

Q: "My question is for The Bushwhackers: Do you guys think you're still good enough to make a run at the WWF tag team title?" —Doug Modono, Tyler, TX

(Continued on page 76)

Raven grimaces in pain after being hit with a frying pan by Tommy Dreamer. This feud has been raging for more than a year, but Dreamer says that's Raven's fault because he's always dragging new people into it.

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6. Taz music video
7. Taz vs. Sabu from ECW wild match
8. Taz + Kevin Sullivan vs. Axl + Ian Rotten
9. Taz + Kevin Sullivan + Hotbody vs. Badd Co. + Tommy Dreamer
10. Taz + Kevin Sullivan vs. Original Shiek + Pat Tanaka – bloody!!!
11. Taz + Kevin Sullivan brawl with Public Enemy + Bruise Brothers
12. Taz + Kevin Sullivan vs. Bruise Brothers (titlechange) wild brawl
13. Taz vs. JT Smith
14. Taz + Kevin Sullivan + Crash vs. Rebel + Stetson + Pitbull # 1
15. Taz vs. Jimmy Snuka

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5. Taz vs. Dean Malenko
6. Taz vs. Steve Richards
7. Taz + Sabu vs. Chris Benoit + Dean Malenko 5 stars Public Enemy run in
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5. Taz vs. Sandman
6. Taz vs. Pitbull # 1 (dog collar match) bloody
7. Taz + Sabu vs. Pitbulls
8. Taz vs. Chris Benoit
9. Taz + Sabu vs. Malenko Brothers
10. Taz vs. Al Snow
11. Taz + Sabu vs. Public Enemy
12. Taz vs. Chris Benoit rematch

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Introducing

By Dave Rosenbaum

JAMES STONE

IT IS THE home of imprisoned mobster John Gotti—a tight-knit ethnic community with a pizza parlor on every corner. In the late-1980s, the town gained national attention when a group of teenagers chased a black man to his death on the Belt Parkway.

Howard Beach, New York—home of James Stone.

"People say bad things about my town, and I don't like it," said Stone. "I'm gonna change all that. People are gonna start remembering Howard Beach for the right reason: me!"

Stone, who goes by the nickname Little Guido in ECW, has drawn some attention because he's teaming with J.T. Smith in ECW as The Full-Blooded Italians, or FBI for short. What's unusual about this pairing is that Smith is an African-American, and although it's possible that he has some Italian blood running through his veins, there's little chance he's full-blooded.

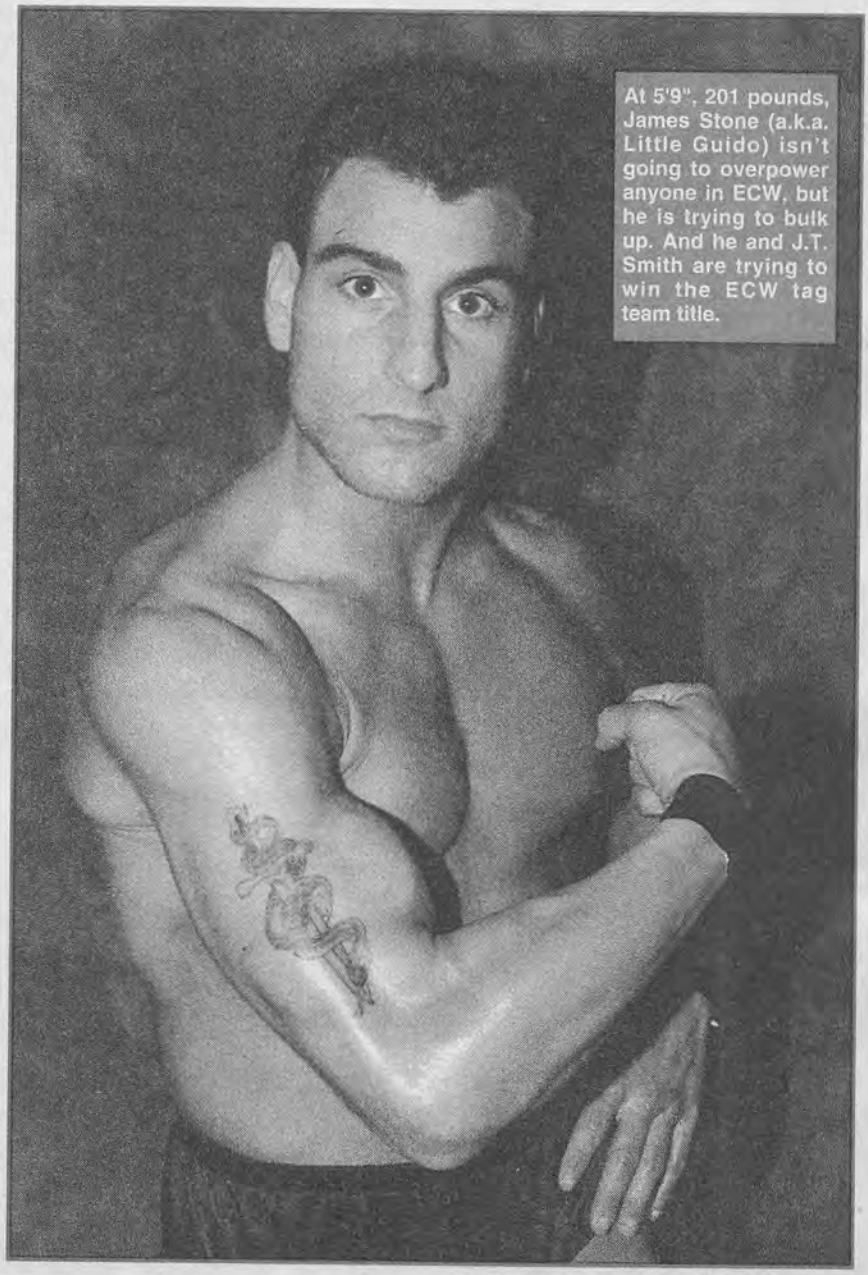
"Sure he is," Stone said, leaving it at that. "He's my *paisan*."

Well, we're all for racial harmony.

We're also for boy-makes-good stories, which appears to be what we have with Stone. Born in Howard Beach, he started wrestling in junior high school and captained the wrestling team in his senior year at Nanuet High School.

"Sometimes the referees thought I was a little rough, if you know what I mean, but the thing is, I always wanted to become a professional wrestler," Stone said. "The amateur stuff wasn't tough enough for a person of my credentials."

Stone knew at an early age that he wanted to be just like Roddy



At 5'9", 201 pounds, James Stone (a.k.a. Little Guido) isn't going to overpower anyone in ECW, but he is trying to bulk up. And he and J.T. Smith are trying to win the ECW tag team title.

James Stone? Doesn't sound Italian to us, but this talented youngster is part of an "Italian" tag team in ECW. Hey, if this team takes off, Stone might have to give up his job at his family's pizza parlor!

Piper. He loved Piper's interviews and wrestling style and tried to model himself after the "Rowdy Scot." But when Stone attended a wrestling camp in upstate New York during his sophomore and junior years in high school, he was urged to just be himself. He met wrestler Jerry Fazio and was given the telephone number of Mike Masters, who ran a wrestling school in Parsippany, New Jersey.

"The first time I met James, he was unpolished," Masters recalled. "He had the amateur moves down, but the other stuff he was kind of feeling his way through. It was almost like he was trying to imitate the stuff he saw on TV."

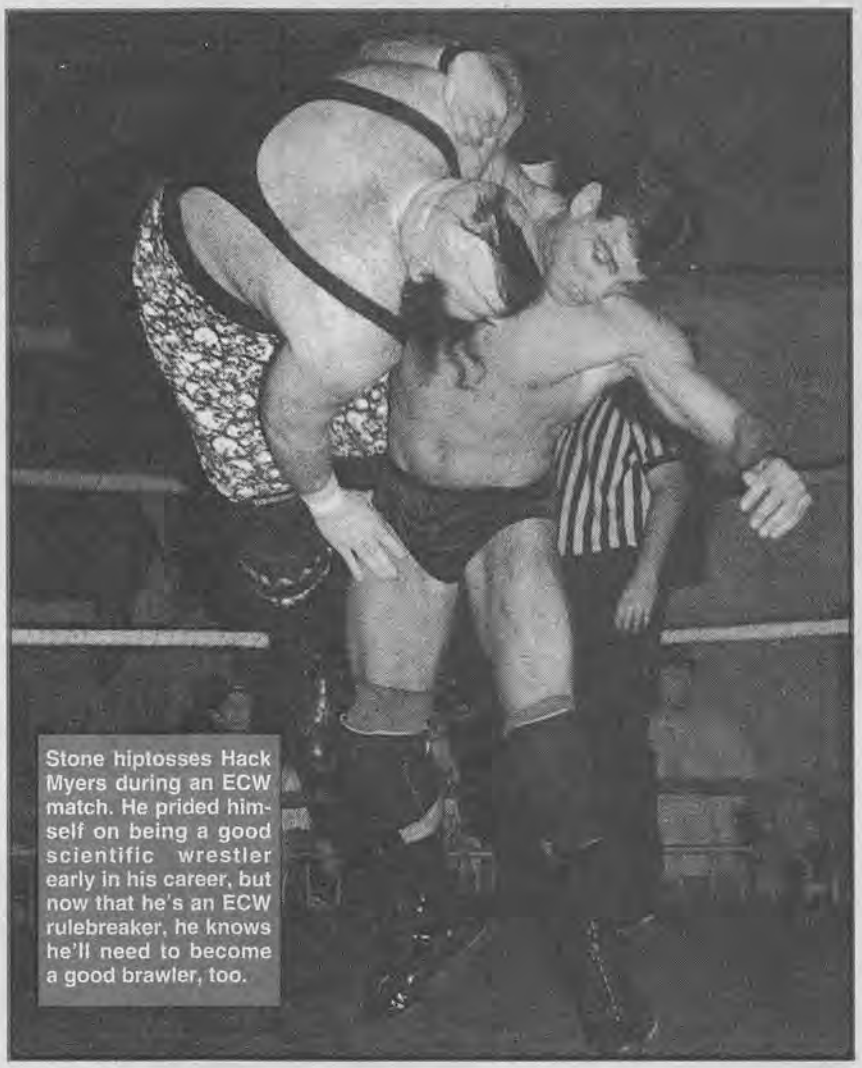
The other concern was Stone's size: At 5'9", 201 pounds, he's well below heavyweight standards. Masters urged Stone to rely upon his amateur skills and to try to build his upper body. Stone attended Masters' school for six months before making his pro debut in September 1991 in Parsippany.

"My first match was a draw with some punk named Eric Fox, who's nowhere right now," Stone said. "He went nowhere, but I'm going someplace. That's the bottom line. You might say I outfoxed him."

Stone spent the next several months wrestling for independent promotions such as Universal Wrestling Superstars, the NWF, IPW, and the NWA. But while wrestling on a card in Monticello, New York, in February 1992, Stone suffered a setback that nearly ended his career: He broke his jaw during a match.

"I thought that was it for me," Stone said. "Doctors were telling me that if I broke the jaw one more time, they weren't certain they could fix it. I was depressed. I just went home and sat around my house all day."

But Masters wouldn't let Stone quit. He talked him back into the ring, and in early-1993, Stone returned on an independent card. Masters had one more suggestion for Stone: Expand your abilities my wrestling in Japan. So for one week each month for an entire year, Stone packed his bags and flew to Japan to wrestle in the UWFI, which at the time was also the part-time home of Big Van Vader.



Stone hiptosses Hack Myers during an ECW match. He prided himself on being a good scientific wrestler early in his career, but now that he's an ECW rulebreaker, he knows he'll need to become a good brawler, too.

"I learned a lot from that," Stone said. "Before that, the only thing I knew about Japan was that sushi stuff they have tastes real bad."

Stone was going through a learning stage of his career. He also spent time in Nashville, Tennessee, with trainer Billy Robinson, the former AWA great. When the UWFI broke up, he returned to America full-time and made his debut in ECW. Now he's hoping to get better ... and bigger.

"I figure this: I need to add about 25 pounds if people are going to take me seriously in ECW, and I'm talking about promoters and matchmakers," Stone said. "When I'm not wrestling, I help run my family's pizza parlor in the Bronx, so maybe if I hang out there enough, I'll eat the product, if you know what I mean. Whatever it takes, I'm gonna do it. Hey, I could've quit years ago when I broke my jaw, but I decided to stick with it. If you're gonna do something, you might as well do it all the way."

Although The Full-Blooded Italians are a long way from achieving their goal of winning the ECW tag team title, Stone and Smith are working hard to move up the ladder. They're not as violent as most other ECW tag teams, but they say they've been cruising the streets of South Philadelphia, picking fights and trying to pick up some new "street tactics."

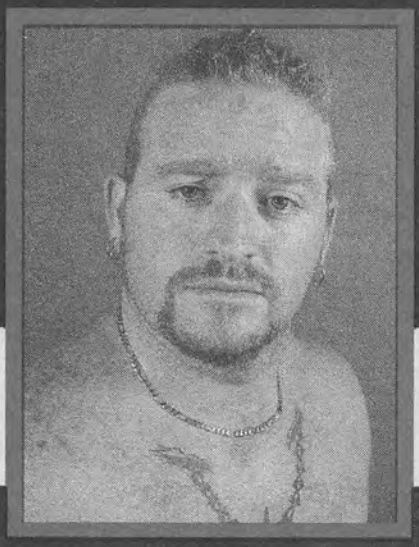
Maybe they should return to Howard Beach for a few lessons.

"Don't mess with my town," Stone said.

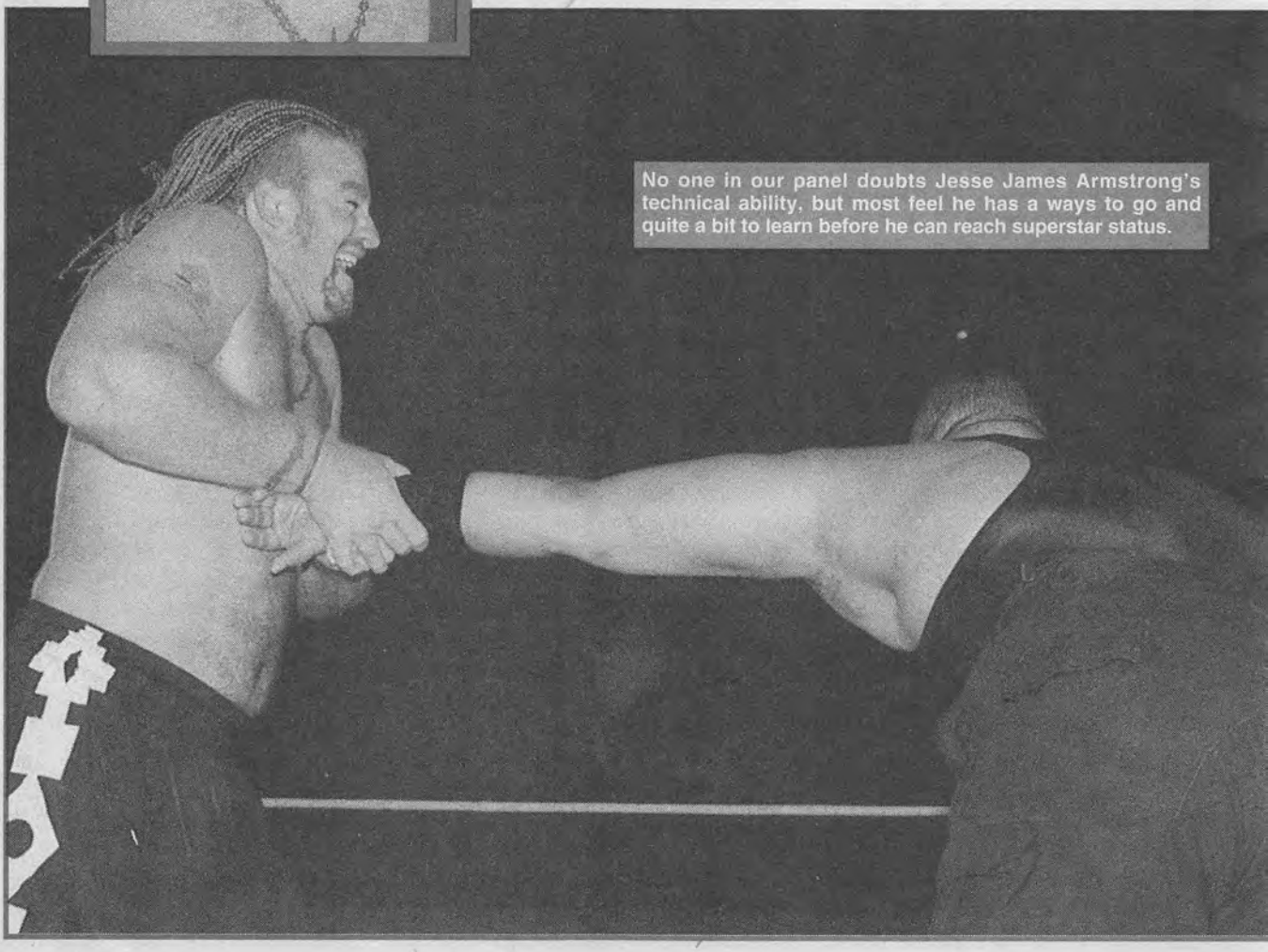
We wouldn't think of it. □

X-Ray

THE WRESTLER PANEL EXAMINES



JESSE JAMES ARMSTRONG



No one in our panel doubts Jesse James Armstrong's technical ability, but most feel he has a ways to go and quite a bit to learn before he can reach superstar status.

CAPT. LOU ALBANO

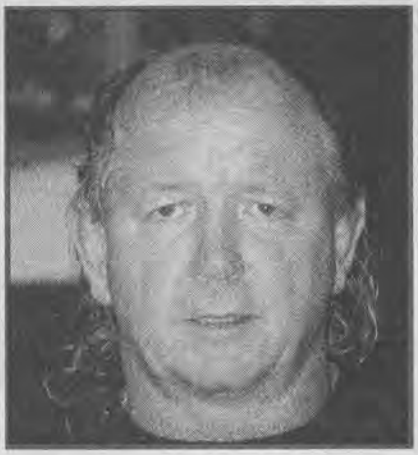
"I got a hard time deciding what I think of this guy. The word that comes to mind when I think about Jesse James Armstrong has to be unpredictable. He doesn't know what side he's on. I think hangin' around 'Double-J' Jeff Jarrett was bad for him. He's trying to be like 'Double-J,' and that just ain't the way to go, brother. Jarrett is real flashy now. This Armstrong kid is a good, solid, technical wrestler. He should focus more on substance than style."

Capt. Lou Albano, "The Guiding Light," has led 13 different tag teams to a record 17 WWF World tag team titles.

KILLER KOWALSKI

"This kid's killer instinct concerns me. What I mean is I don't know if he has enough of it to go very far. There are times during a match when you just have to say to yourself, 'This is it. I'm ending this match right now, case closed.' That means you show no mercy and don't give the guy a second to recover or rest. Armstrong, I've noticed at times, likes to admire his work after he executes a nice move. He has to recognize when it's time to go for the kill."

Killer Kowalski, one of the most sadistic rule-breakers in the sport's history, runs a wrestling school in Reading, Massachusetts.



DORY FUNK JR.

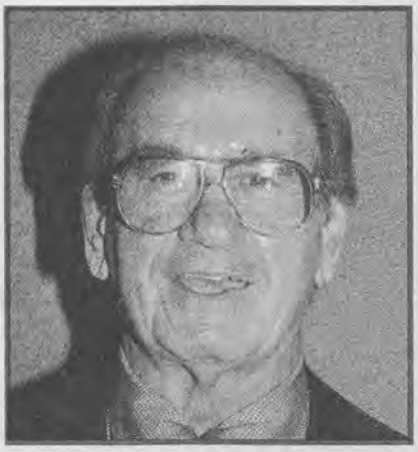
"People used to ask me all the time if it was tough having a famous father and brother in the same sport as me. I tell 'em it's only that way if you let it be that way. In other words, I never felt I had to prove I was better than Terry or my dad. We all did our own thing. I'm sensing that Jesse James is trying too hard to equal what his father and brothers have done and defend the family honor. He's got a world of talent. If he learns to only worry about himself, he'll be better off."

Dory Funk Jr. held the NWA World championship from 1969 to 1973. He still wrestles from time to time, primarily in Japan.

FABULOUS MOOLAH

"I can't help but love some of the wild hairdos this Armstrong has come up with, darlin'. He's a wrestler that I think is going to be a big star by the turn of the century. He's certainly not on a level with Bret Hart or Shawn Michaels, but he's similar to those two in some ways. When they started their careers, I bet no one thought they were big enough or strong enough to win world titles, but they did. Jesse James is quick, agile, and smart. He's going places."

Fabulous Moolah, the finest woman wrestler in history, held the World title for 28 years. She trains wrestlers in Columbia, South Carolina.



LOU THESZ

"It's obvious Armstrong learned a lot from being around Jeff Jarrett. I also think it was good that the two of them competed against each other for a while. Armstrong must have learned a great deal in his losses to Jarrett. When he started his pro career, he was a little sloppy in his execution of even basic moves like armbars and chinlocks. But Jarrett is such a good technical wrestler that he must have helped Jesse James work on his moves and holds. He's good now, but he's still learning."

Lou Thesz held the NWA World title six times during his fabulous 50-year career. Many consider him the greatest all-around wrestler in history.

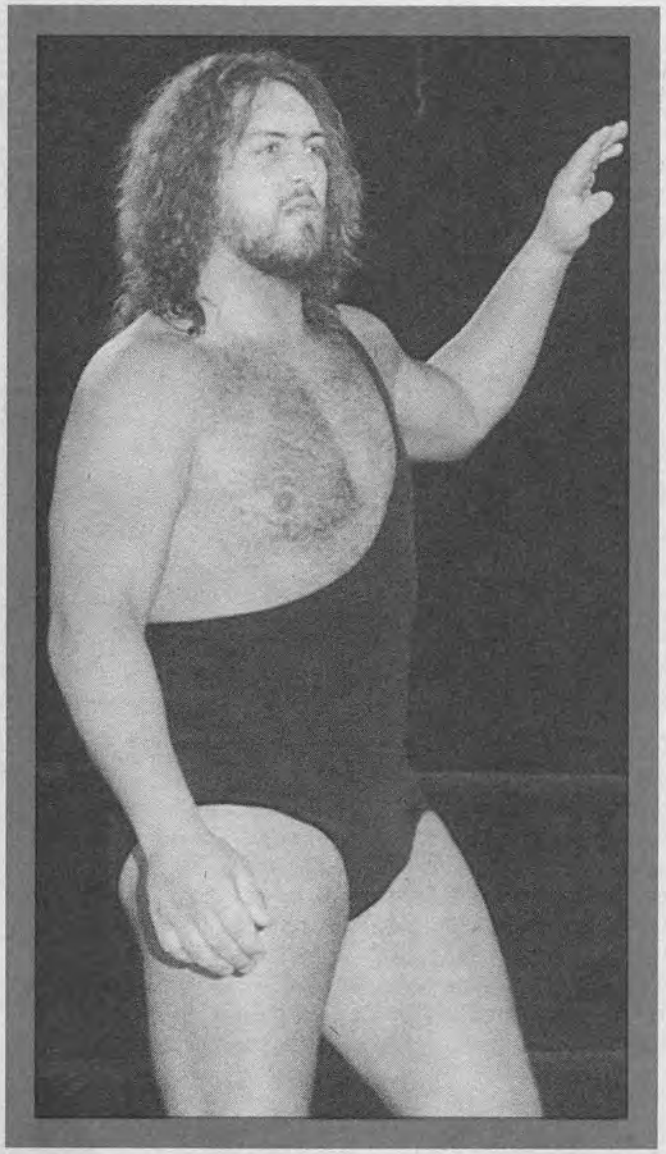
LANCE RUSSELL

"I'm glad I've had a chance to watch his career develop here in Memphis over the last year. He's much more confident and comfortable now than he was when he left the WWF last summer. More mature, too. He doesn't jump right into feuds the way he once did. He's learned patience in the USWA, and the fans love him. I don't think you've seen the best of him yet. Give him another year, let him develop a great finishing move, and I think you'll have something special."

Lance Russell, a wrestling broadcaster since 1954, is now retired. He makes periodic guest appearances on WMC-TV in Memphis.

Q & A

THE GIANT



TWO WEEKS EARLIER, he was a beaten man, the victim of an amazing Hulk Hogan recovery after the "Hulkster" had been floored by one of his vicious choke-slams. But on April 22, The Giant felt like a champion ... because he was one.

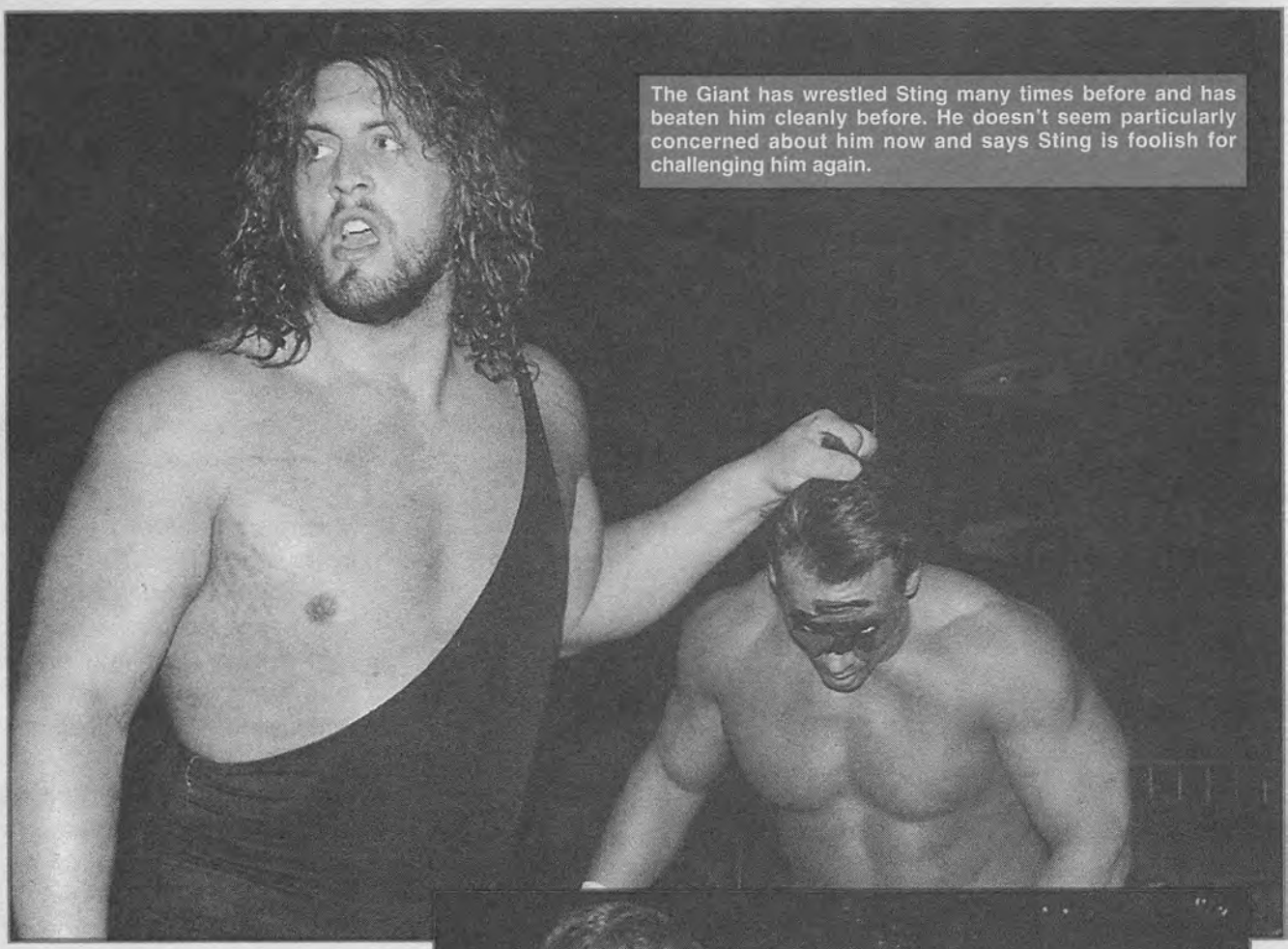
The 7'4", 430-pound monster became the first rookie to win a world heavyweight title when he defeated Ric Flair for the WCW championship in Albany, Georgia, that night. Not even great rookies of the past like Flair, Lex Luger, and Bob Backlund won a world heavyweight title in their first year.

The WCW card started with The Giant and Flair teaming against Sting and Lex Luger. But when Flair took a cup of coffee from Woman and threw it toward Sting and Luger, he accidentally hit Giant in the eyes. The Giant demanded a match and Flair reluctantly agreed. That was his second mistake of the night.

The third came in the match itself, when he misjudged the effect of his figure-four leglock on The Giant's monstrous legs. The Giant sat up, and Flair released the hold. One building-shaking choke-slam later, Flair was pinned.

The Giant started in WCW last year as Kevin Sullivan's most potent weapon against Hogan. When The Giant failed to win the World belt from the "Hulkster," he took on Jimmy Hart as his manager. These days, The Giant looks around and sees nothing but enemies, fan favorites and rulebreakers alike. But Hogan is the man he wants most.

Shortly after winning the belt, The Giant sat down with Editor-in-Chief Dave Lenker for an interview. Despite having won the title, The Giant wasn't happy.



The Giant has wrestled Sting many times before and has beaten him cleanly before. He doesn't seem particularly concerned about him now and says Sting is foolish for challenging him again.

Q: Congratulations on winning your first WCW World title, and as a rookie no less. Do you realize that you're the first rookie to win a world belt?

A: I knew it, but I wasn't surprised. Tell me one time in wrestling history when there's been a rookie like me.

Q: Well, Ric Flair was our Rookie of the Year in 1975, and Lex Luger was Rookie of the Year in 1986 and ...

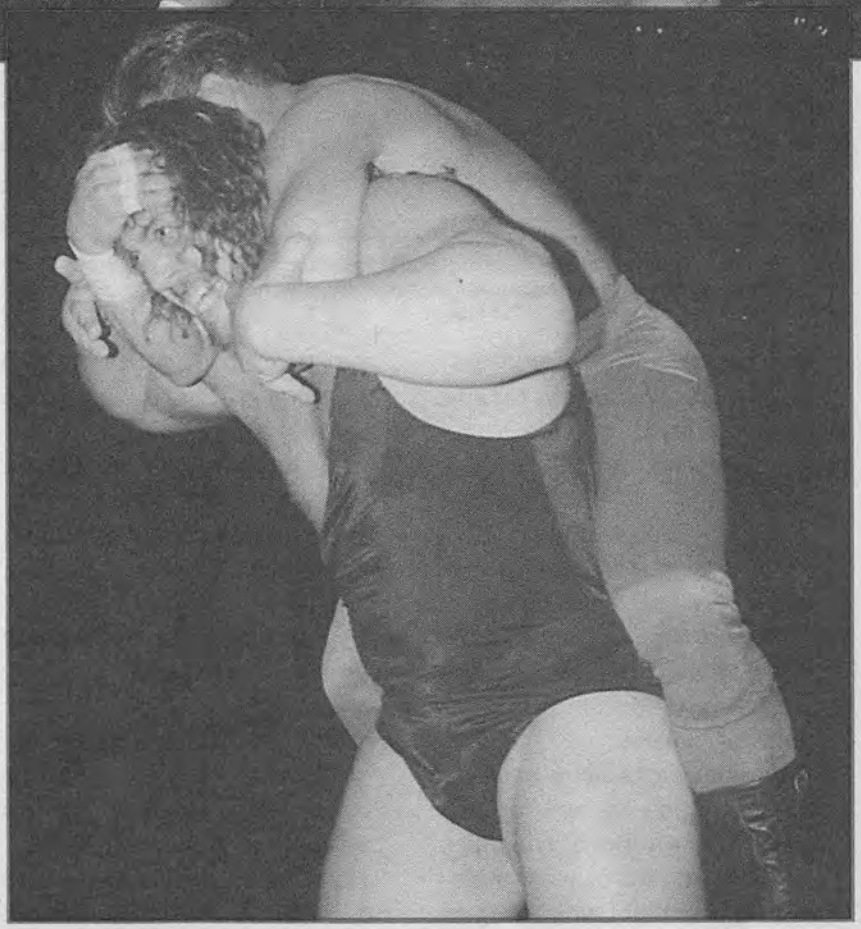
A: Stop right there, punk! Did Flair win a world title in 1975?

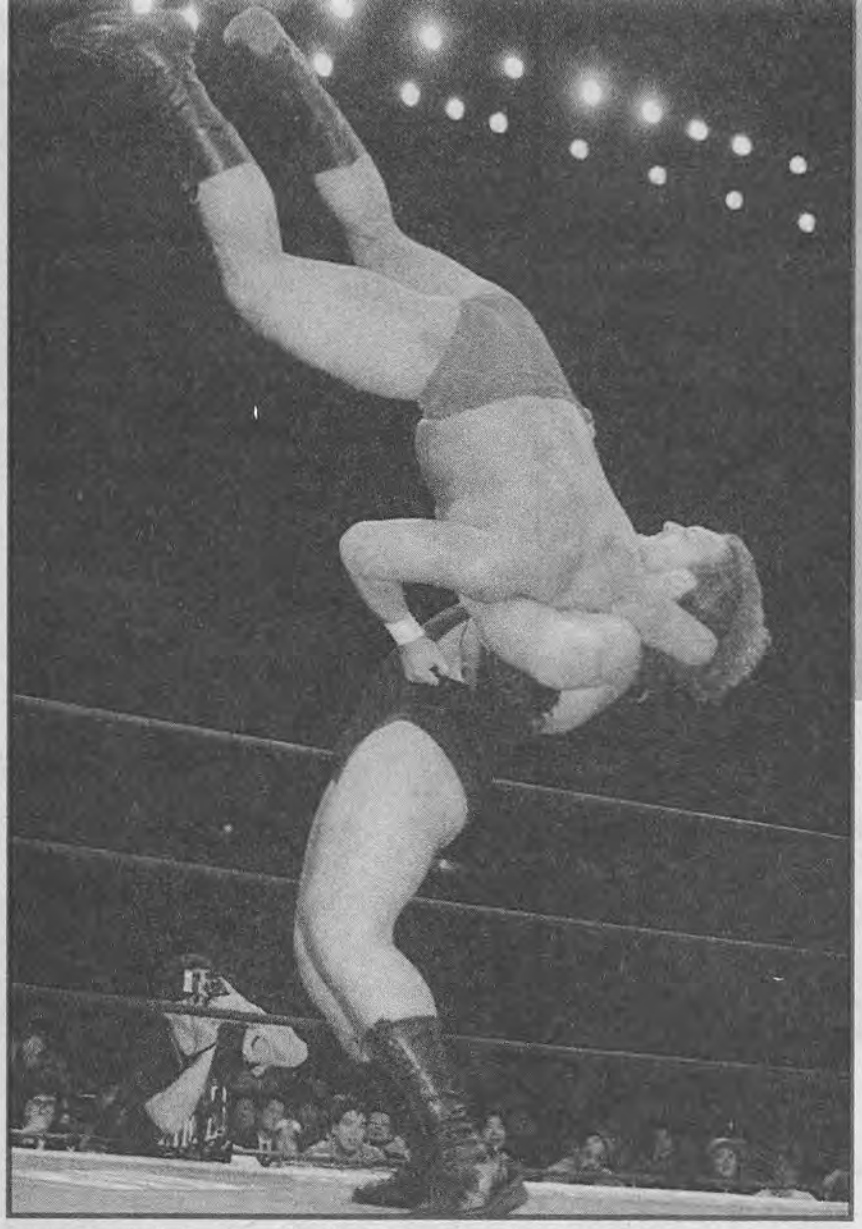
Q: Well, no, he didn't.

A: Did Luger win a world title in 1986?

Q: No, he didn't. Like I just said, you're the first rookie to win the WCW World title ... or any world heavyweight title.

A: And that makes me the greatest rookie of all-time, so don't





Many experts have given The Giant a lot of credit for honing his wrestling skills during trips to Japan. He seems to think, however, that he'll only need his choke-slam to continue to dominate WCW's best.

you forget it. Nobody in wrestling history has ever done what I've done.

Q: And speaking of done, a lot of people thought you were just that after Hulk Hogan got up from your choke-slam a few weeks before you won the belt.

A: Who are those idiots? Show them to me! Give me names!

Q: To tell you the truth, I guess I was one of them.

A: Well, that means you have no right to even be sitting here with me. Anybody who has felt the impact of my choke-slam knew that I was going to be the next WCW World champion. There was never any doubt.

Q: No doubt? Even when Hogan got up from your choke-slam?

A: Appearances can be deceiving sometimes.

Q: What does that mean?

A: Don't trust your eyes. That choke-slam missed.

Q: It missed?

A: That's right. I didn't get Hogan with the full force of the choke-slam. My hands slipped on his sweaty throat. He was so nervous that he didn't know what to do. He was dripping with sweat! He was a scared dog!

Q: That sounds disgusting. It also sounds like an excuse.

A: ***(Shouting)*** **It's the truth! Don't ever doubt me! I'll show you what a real choke-slam feels like, and you'll know that nobody could ever get up from a real one.**

Q: No, thank you, I'll take your word for it. But you seemed so surprised when you turned around and saw Hogan on his feet. Why?

A: Because I thought I got him good enough. I didn't, and if Hogan's fool enough to try me again—and you know he is a real stupid man—I'll make sure I get it right the next time.

Q: Obviously you got Flair with the full force.

A: I felt his body shake. I heard his bones rattle when his beaten body crashed into the canvas.

Q: That had to be a sickening sound.

A: It was the sweetest sound I ever heard.

Q: You know, I just read that Fran Drescher of *The Nanny* is suing *TV Guide* because she spilled hot coffee over herself during a photo shoot for the magazine.

A: What does that have to do with me?

Q: Well, I figured that your feud with Flair began when he mistakenly threw coffee in your eyes.

A: Mistakenly? How do you know it was mistakenly? How does a person throw coffee into *my* eyes by mistake?

Q: Because it looked like he was aiming for Sting and Luger.

A: What it looked like and what it was are two different things. Flair got what he asked for. Did you hear his apology?

Q: Sure. It sounded sincere.

A: *(Shouting)* It sounded like the lamest thing I ever heard! How dare Flair try to get away with that! And then when I demanded a match, he tried to run away.

Q: But he agreed to a match.

A: He was embarrassed into it.

Q: Actually, I have to say that I've never heard of Flair being embarrassed into doing anything, much less defending his WCW World title.

A: Not his WCW World title. *My* WCW World title!

Q: Well, now it is.

A: And always. If anybody wants to challenge me, they're going to have to think about dealing with my choke-slam.

Q: Well, it could always slip, right?

A: What's that? Don't get wise with me, punk. I wouldn't hesitate to choke-slam a reporter, you know.

Q: What are you, Albert Belle in wrestling trunks?

A: Don't compare me to mortals.

Q: Excuse me, I didn't know. Another thing I didn't know is that some WCW fans like you. Were you surprised that some of the fans cheered you after you won the belt?

A: They were scared. Those idiots cheered out of fear.

Q: Interesting explanation. Another interesting aspect of your match against Flair is that Jimmy Hart didn't interfere.

A: Why is that interesting? Are you saying that I need Jimmy Hart's interference to win? I don't need anybody's help. The choke-slam does it all.

Q: Let me ask you this: A lot of people are saying that even though you won the WCW World title, it doesn't mean anything until you beat Hulk Hogan, because Hogan has beaten you already. Do you agree?

A: No. Hogan didn't beat me.

Q: He didn't?

A: No, he didn't ... never cleanly. He never pinned me. But they are right about one thing: Until I choke-slam and destroy Hogan, this belt doesn't mean that much to me. My goals are to win the WCW World title and to destroy "Hulkamania" singlehandedly. So far, I have done only one of those things.

Q: So you welcome a challenge from Hogan?

A: Any day, any time. Right now, if he wants.

Q: I don't know if that can be set up, but I'm sure Hogan would love to wrestle you again.

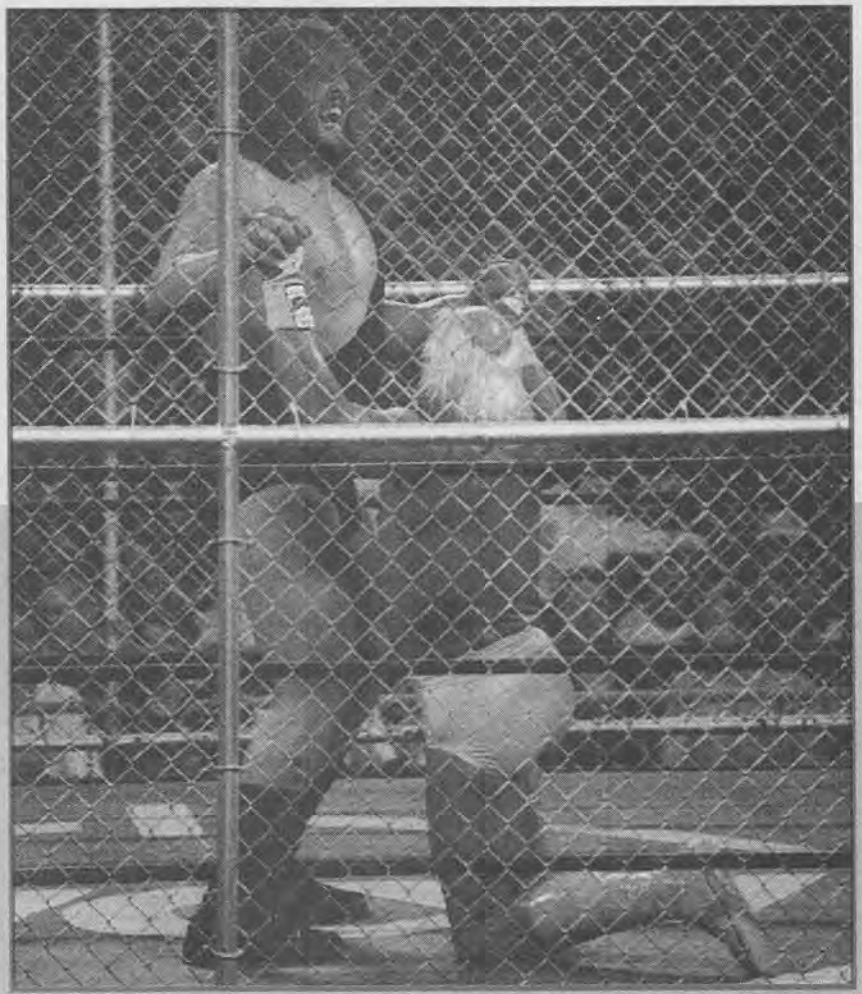
A: Bring him on. Let him make the biggest mistake of his life.

Q: What about some of the others, like Sting, Lex Luger, and Randy Savage?

A: Same goes for all them. They all know what my choke-slam feels like. I beat them all before, so I'd be glad to do it again. It just shows you how stupid they are. I choke-slam them and leave them laid out on the mat and they want to face me again. Idiots—all of them.

Q: Giant, once again, congratulations on winning the belt as a rookie, and I certainly look forward to your matches against Hogan.

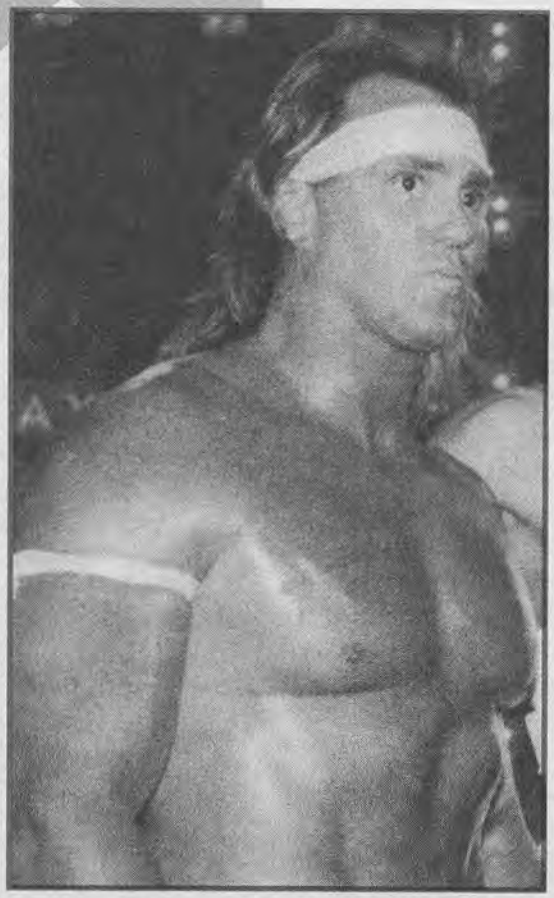
A: Of course you do. But you wouldn't if your name was Hogan. □



This is the man The Giant can't wait to get his hands on again: Hulk Hogan. The "Hulkster" has beaten him before and has gotten right up after getting choke-slammed by The Giant, but Giant says those things won't happen again.

Spot Light ON . . .

THE BOOTY MAN



HE HAS TO be one of the most confusing wrestlers for fans to try to figure out. Is he Brutus Beefcake? The Barber, perhaps? Maybe The Butcher ... or The Man With No Name? What about Zodiac? Okay, we'll just make it easy for everyone involved and call him The Booty Man.

No matter what the guy calls himself, we know this 6'4", 273-pound San Francisco native was a childhood friend of Hulk Hogan and began his pro career in 1984. After spending some time in the independents and in Japan, he made a name for himself as the rulebreaking Beefcake in the WWF under the guidance of manager Johnny Valiant. A few years later, he began cutting the hair of his opponents after rendering them unconscious with his sleeperhold.

After failing in his bid to win the WWF title from Hogan in '84, he formed the "Dream Team" with Greg Valentine, and they beat Mike Rotundo and Barry Windham for the WWF tag belts in August 1985.

But soon after he and Valentine lost the belts, they split, and Beefcake became a fan favorite. He went on to feud with Adrian Adonis, The Honky Tonk Man, and Jimmy Hart, whose head he shaved at WrestleMania IV.

By this time, he was back in Hogan's good graces, too; together, they beat Randy Savage and Zeus at SummerSlam '89. Less than a year later, however, tragedy struck. Beefcake's face was seriously injured in a parasailing accident, and he required extensive surgery to have it reconstructed. Hogan was one of the first people to arrive at his bedside in the hospital.

Beefcake was unable to return to wrestling until 1993, and when he did, he immediately got into a WWF feud with Money Inc. Hogan soon came out of retirement to help him with that, but when the "Hulkster" moved on to WCW in the spring of 1994, his best friend went with him. It wasn't until Halloween Havoc '94, however, that Hogan found out that the masked man who had been attacking him for months was Beefcake (a.k.a. The Butcher).

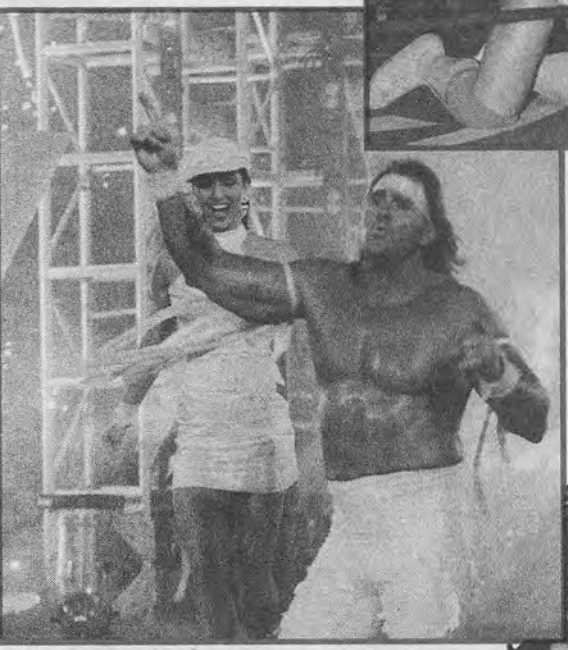
Hogan got the best of his feud with Butcher and his two new allies, Kevin Sullivan and Avalanche, and soon Sullivan and Beefcake separated and began feuding.

Soon thereafter, Beefcake disappeared from WCW, only to return several months later as Zodiac, a member of Sullivan's new Dungeon of Doom. He later said that he developed the Zodiac persona so he could spy on Sullivan for Hogan. Now he's The Booty Man, and he and Hogan are pals yet again. Plus he has The Booty Babe, Kimberly, at his side all the time. His career is definitely on the upswing again. Booty deserves a chance to shine in our "Spotlight."

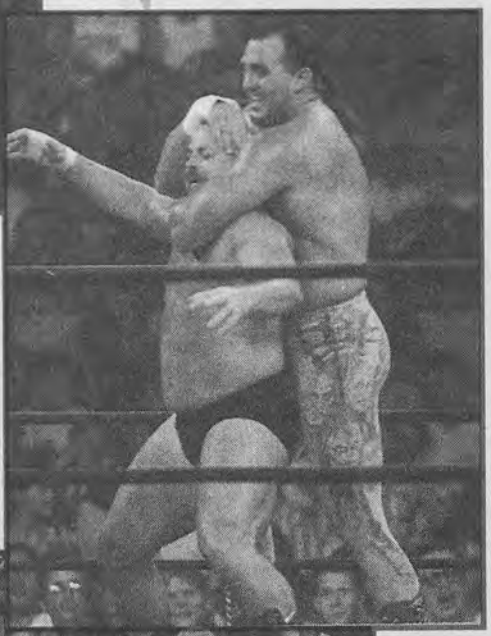
March 1986: Brutus Beefcake and Greg Valentine—The Dream Team in the WWF—double-team Davey Boy Smith of The British Bulldogs. The Bulldogs ended Beefcake and Valentine's WWF tag team title reign at WrestleMania II.

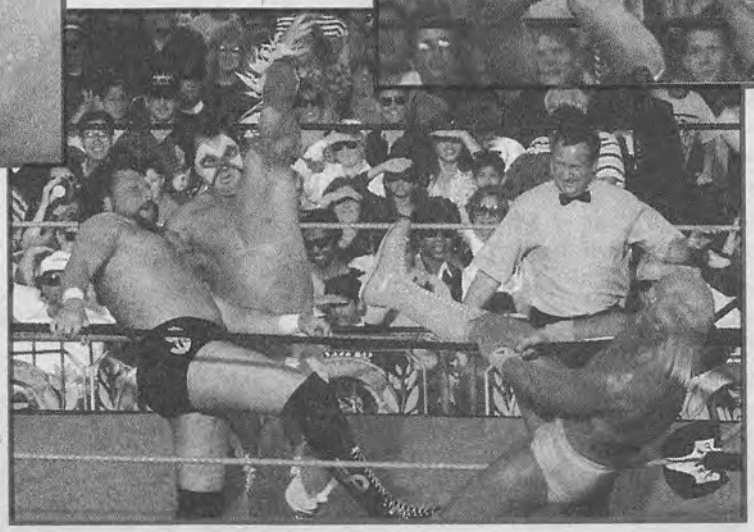
March 1988: Brutus "The Barber" Beefcake had to settle for a victory by disqualification over then-WWF I-C champ The Honky Tonk Man at WrestleMania IV, but he did get to shave Jimmy Hart's head afterward.

December 1994: After turning against Hogan and joining Kevin Sullivan's Faces of Fear, The Butcher got a shot at the "Hulkster's" WCW title at Starrcade '94. He had his moments in the match, but he lost.



May 1995: Beefcake called himself The Man With No Name when he and Sullivan briefly feuded in the spring of 1995. Sullivan got the best of their battles.





April 1996: These days, The Booty Man and Hogan are good friends again, and Booty hardly ever makes his way to the ring without "Booty Babe" Kimberly at his side.

April 1993: Beefcake had to wear a special mask to protect his face when he first returned to wrestling following a horrifying parasailing accident. He and Hulk Hogan lost to Money Inc. by disqualification at WrestleMania IX.

MATT BROCK'S

Looking Back

May 1989

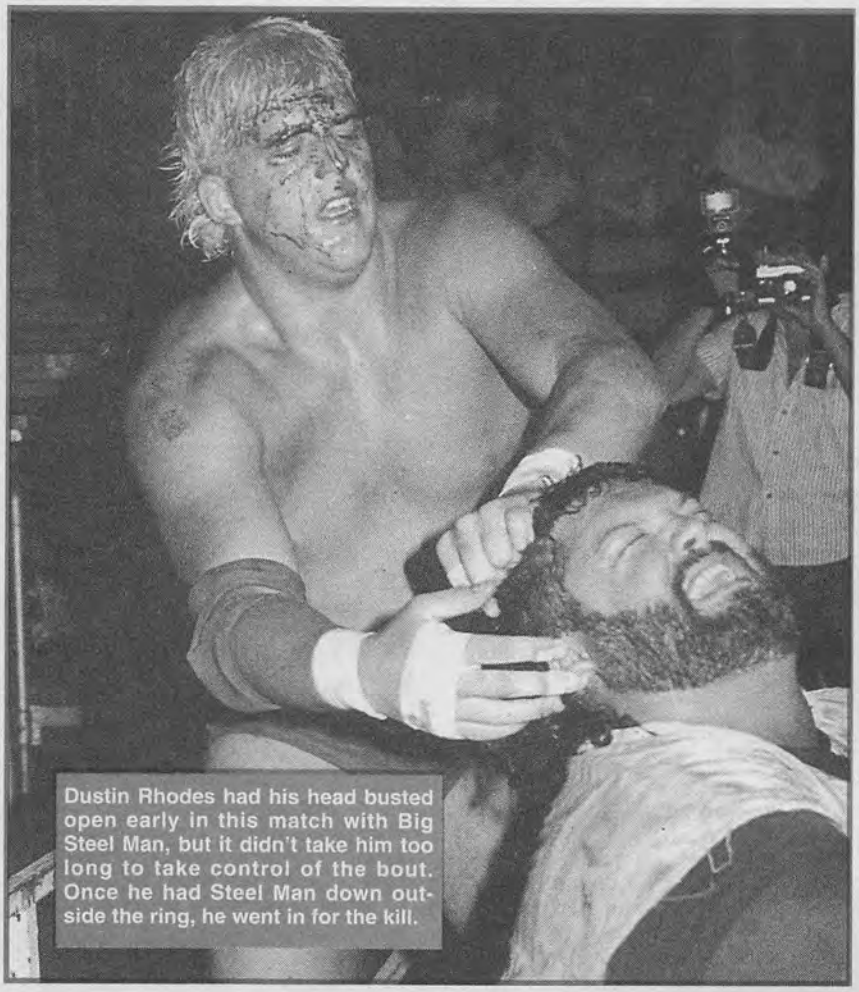
Dustin Rhodes vs. Big Steel Man

I CAN'T TAKE it anymore. I'll say it again: I can't take it anymore! My old girlfriend Sheila Warner used to tell me if I was more open with my feelings, I'd feel better. Well I was just very open with my feelings about Goldust right there, and I still don't feel too good. It still burns me that a good wrestler like Dustin Rhodes feels like he has to transform himself into Goldust to be a success in the WWF.

Enough already, Dustin. It's been almost a year now and the Goldust thing is getting old—real old!

I tell you what would make me feel better: seeing Dustin rip off the wig and bodysuit, wipe away all the gold paint or makeup or whatever that crap is, and say, "Yeah, all of you were right. This *was* a stupid idea. Goldust, the cross-dressing idiot, is dead, and Dustin Rhodes, the tough, no-nonsense Texan is back!"

Six months ago, I swore it wouldn't be more than a few more weeks before it happened. Never was one for making good predictions anyway. But since it looks



Dustin Rhodes had his head busted open early in this match with Big Steel Man, but it didn't take him too long to take control of the bout. Once he had Steel Man down outside the ring, he went in for the kill.

like I won't be seeing plain-old Dustin for a while, I'll just have to settle for the memories.

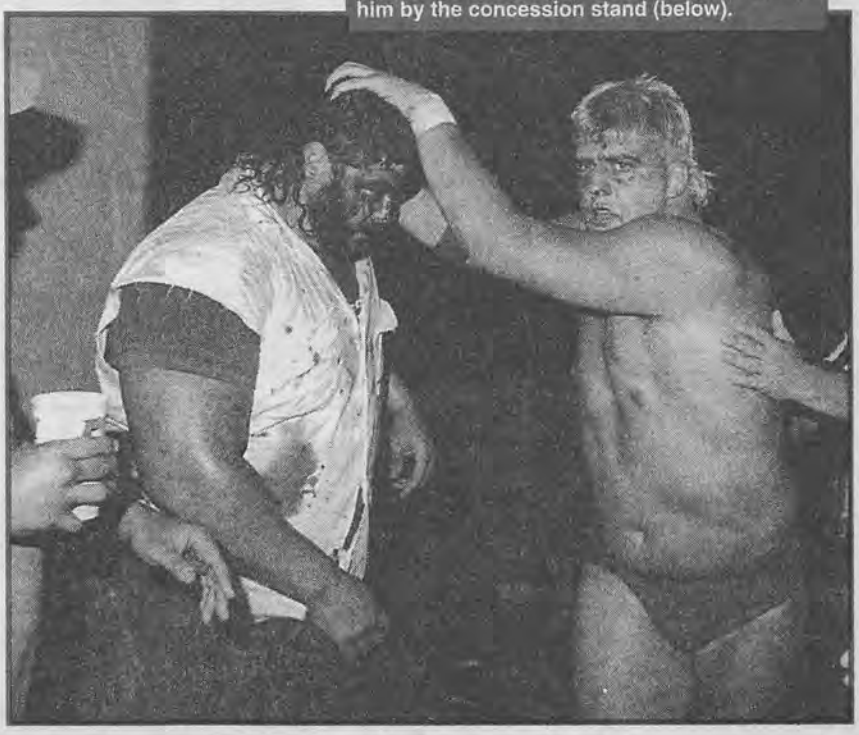
I was looking through some of my old notes the other day when I came across a note I received from Dustin in the fall of 1989. Simple, basic, straightforward, right-to-the-point note. Kind of like Dustin himself at the time.

Seems I had said something good about him in a column or a story somewhere, and he wrote to say he appreciated it. You get that kind of stuff from rookies a lot. They appreciate the good press when they're just getting started, but they forget about you once they hit it big. Some of them at least.

Until the last year or so, Dustin had always been a standup guy. Never ducked a question, was never rude, always had a few minutes for me. Intensely focused, too. Even right before matches you'd think he'd have no problem with. Back in the spring of 1989, he got involved in a series of matches with Big Steel Man on the independent circuit in Florida. Even though Dustin was still pretty green then, I knew he was a lot better than Big Steel Man. Visited him before one bout in West Palm Beach and I almost had to drag the real good quotes out of him. He was almost bland, but I respected the kid.

"I think of every match as my most important match, Matt," he said when I asked him if he was sick of wrestling Steel Man and whether he thought he was ready to move on to better things. "I've beaten this guy before, but I'm happy to be where I am. My time in the spotlight will come. I'm a patient man, but every match means a lot. This is gonna be a good one. I know I gotta keep workin' hard. That's the key to my success: simple hard work."

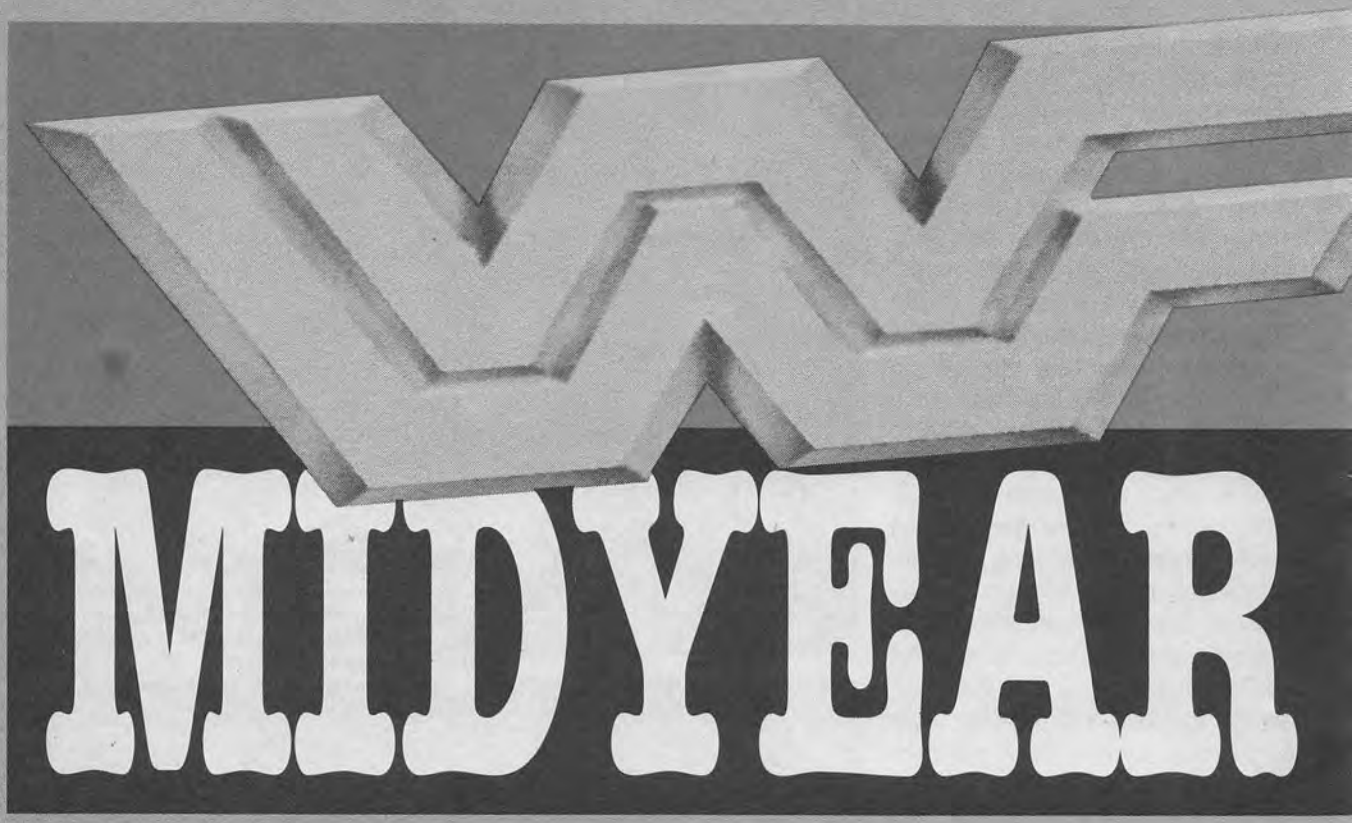
He was right about the match. It was good, and Steel Man almost beat Dustin. But when the match moved outside the ring, "The Natural" did what comes natural to him. The fans roared their approval as he whacked Steel Man with a chair, then grabbed him by the hair and smashed him into two guard rails. Steel Man recovered and opened a large cut on Dustin's head by ramming him into a ringpost, but Dustin soon returned the favor. He dragged Steel Man back toward a concession stand and opened a cut on his forehead. By the time he brought Steel Man back into the ring, Dustin was ready to call it a night. He got the victory by pinfall.



Once Dustin realized he was cut, he decided Steel Man ought to lose some blood, too. He accomplished his objective by bashing Steel Man into a ringpost (above) and tearing into him by the concession stand (below).

Invited him to join me for a late dinner at a local greasy spoon that night, but Dustin declined. Said he was tired and needed to prepare for a match the next night. "I gotta keep workin' hard, Matt," he said. "I do plan on makin' it big, but there's a lot of work to be done before I do. I'm not taking any shortcuts either. I guarantee that one day you'll see my name in lights."

I have, and I'm not happy about it. Goldust doesn't do interviews with old scribes like me. Come back to us, Dustin. It's not too late. □



ACTION . . . . . .

TALENT ROSTER . . .

COMPETITIVENESS .

BUSINESS . . . . . .

PUBLIC IMAGE . . . . .

PAY-PER-VIEWS. . . . .

ARENA SHOWS . . . . .

TV PRODUCTION. . . .

ANNOUNCERS . . . . . .

FAN RELATIONS . . . .

REPORT

. . . B+
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FOOLS? US? NOT here at THE WRESTLER, where we know that the March "Year In Review" issue of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated* is usually the biggest seller in our family of magazines and that the midyear reports for the WWF and WCW aren't far behind. Think we have a problem with tradition? Think again. For the fourth straight year, we're doing midterm reports for the WWF and WCW.

On the following pages, we've put together an offbeat and entertaining look at the WWF's first six months of 1996 (The WCW Midyear Report will appear in the October 1996 issue of *Inside Wrestling*, on sale August 6). You'll read about all the news and views, comings and goings, actions and reactions, and sideshow happenings in the WWF.

It was certainly an active six months. Goldust won the Intercontinental title from Razor Ramon at the Royal Rumble. Shawn Michaels defeated Bret Hart for the WWF World title at WrestleMania XII. The Bodydonnas won the final of the World tag team title tournament after the title was vacated by The Smokin' Gunns. The Ultimate Warrior returned. Roddy Piper was part-president, part-wrestler. Diesel feuded with Michaels, then got ready to leave for WCW. And the WWF entered the war of words with WCW.

We've often said that the first half of a year provides the questions, the second half the answers. So there are now many questions: Can The Ultimate Warrior become a dominant wrestler again? Or is Big Van Vader the man? Can Shawn Michaels hold on to the World title? Will Sunny keep The Bodydonnas on top of the tag team heap? Who will fire the next shot in the federation wars now that WCW has signed Diesel and was expected to sign Razor Ramon as well.

The drama continues. Now turn the page and watch the plot unfold.

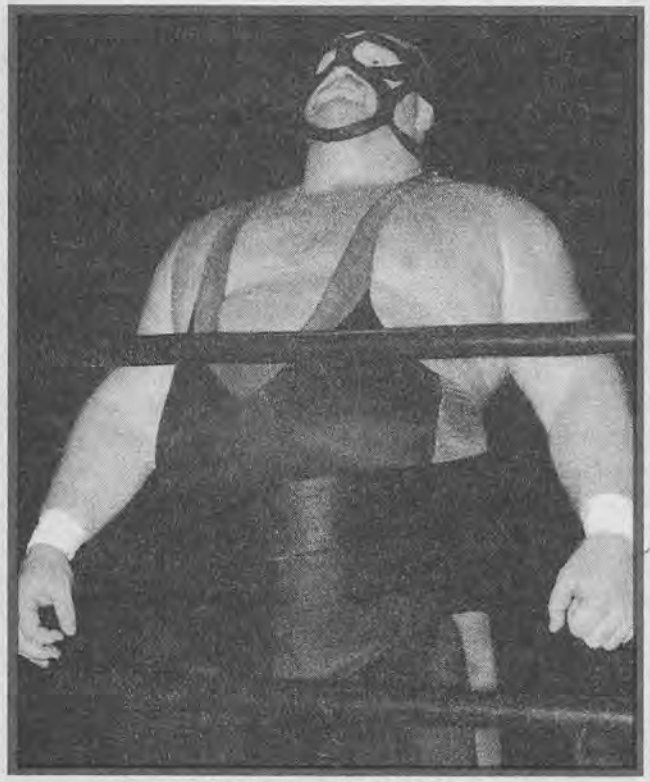
THE GRADES ARE IN ...

They get an "A": **Shawn Michaels** won his first WWF World title with a victory over Bret Hart ... **Bret Hart** gallantly defended the belt up until WrestleMania, then cut short a planned vacation by returning to the ring shortly after his WrestleMania XII loss.

They get a "B": **"Stone-Cold" Steve Austin** piled up one victory after another to roar to the top of the WWF ladder and started getting shots at Michaels ... **Goldust** won the Intercontinental title, but hardly distinguished himself with his title defenses ... **The Undertaker** was a dominant force, but will he get more shots at the World title? ... **The Bodydonnas—Skip** and **Zip**—won the World tag team title, but what would they have done without **Sunny**? ... **Roddy Piper** beat Goldust and The 1-2-3 Kid, although he didn't belong in the ring while he was WWF president ... **Big**

Shawn gets an "A."

WWF MIDYEAR REPORT

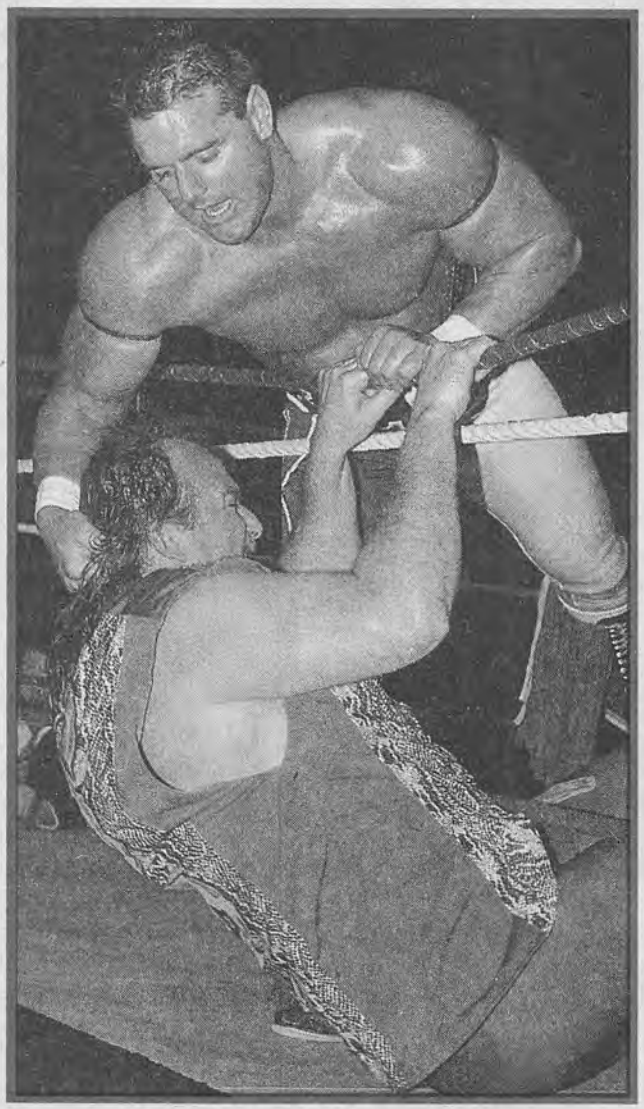


Vader is moving on up

Van Vader has been his usual devastating self since coming to the WWF and is already a real force ... **Mankind**, the former **Cactus Jack**, has opponents protesting his finishing move. It must be good.

They get a "C": **Davey Boy Smith** looked good in tag teams, but struggled in singles action ... Ditto for **Owen Hart**, whose World title hopes look fruitless. We know Bret Hart; he's no Bret Hart ... **Diesel** had a tough half year for a former WWF World champion and was pinned by The Undertaker at WrestleMania XII and by Michaels at In Your House VII ... **Henry** and **Phineas Godwinn** might have won the World tag team belts if Phineas could have kept his mind on business at WrestleMania XII, but he couldn't ... **Ahmed Johnson** should be wrestling, not arm-wrestling ... **Jake Roberts** could use a few clean pins ... **Savio Vega** fell short of the Intercontinental title thanks to Marlena's interference, then fell flat on his face in most of his matches with Steve Austin and—*egads!*—Justin Bradshaw ... **Razor Ramon** was suspended for "unprofessional conduct," then came back to lose a series of matches to Goldust. So much for machismo.

They get a "D": **The 1-2-3 Kid** has run out of upsets ... Have **The Bushwhackers** fallen out of the tag team title picture or what? ... **Duke Droese** has been a non-factor, except when he got his hair cut off ... **Aldo Montoya** is wallowing in undercard matches ... **Hunter Hearst Helmsley** was the Warrior's victim



Davey Boy and Jake have work to do

in less than two minutes at WrestleMania XII and also lost numerous times to Droese.

They get an "F": **Dr. Isaac Yankem** is losing to Aldo Montoya in undercard matches; he should be yanked from the WWF roster ... **Barry Horowitz** has had his 15 minutes of fame ... **Tatanka** accomplished nothing.

They get an "incomplete": **The Ultimate**

Warrior is looking good in his return, but let's see how he fares over the long haul ... **Justin Bradshaw** was impressive in his first few matches ... **Jeff Jarrett** suffered a back injury in February and hadn't returned to the federation as of press time ... **"Wildman" Marc Mero**, the former **Johnny B. Badd**, will make an impact eventually.

RATING THE WRESTLEMANIA XII MATCHES

1. Shawn Michaels vs. Bret Hart. The two iron men go into overtime, and Shawn wins his first WWF World title in spectacular fashion.

2. Roddy Piper vs. Goldust. Great match that proved wrestling needs valet parking ... and that Dustin would be better off wearing boxers.

3. Diesel vs. The Undertaker. An all-out war.

4. Yokozuna, Ahmed Johnson, & Jake Roberts vs. Big Van Vader, Owen Hart, & Davey Boy Smith. Vader vs. Yokozuna was worth the price of admission.

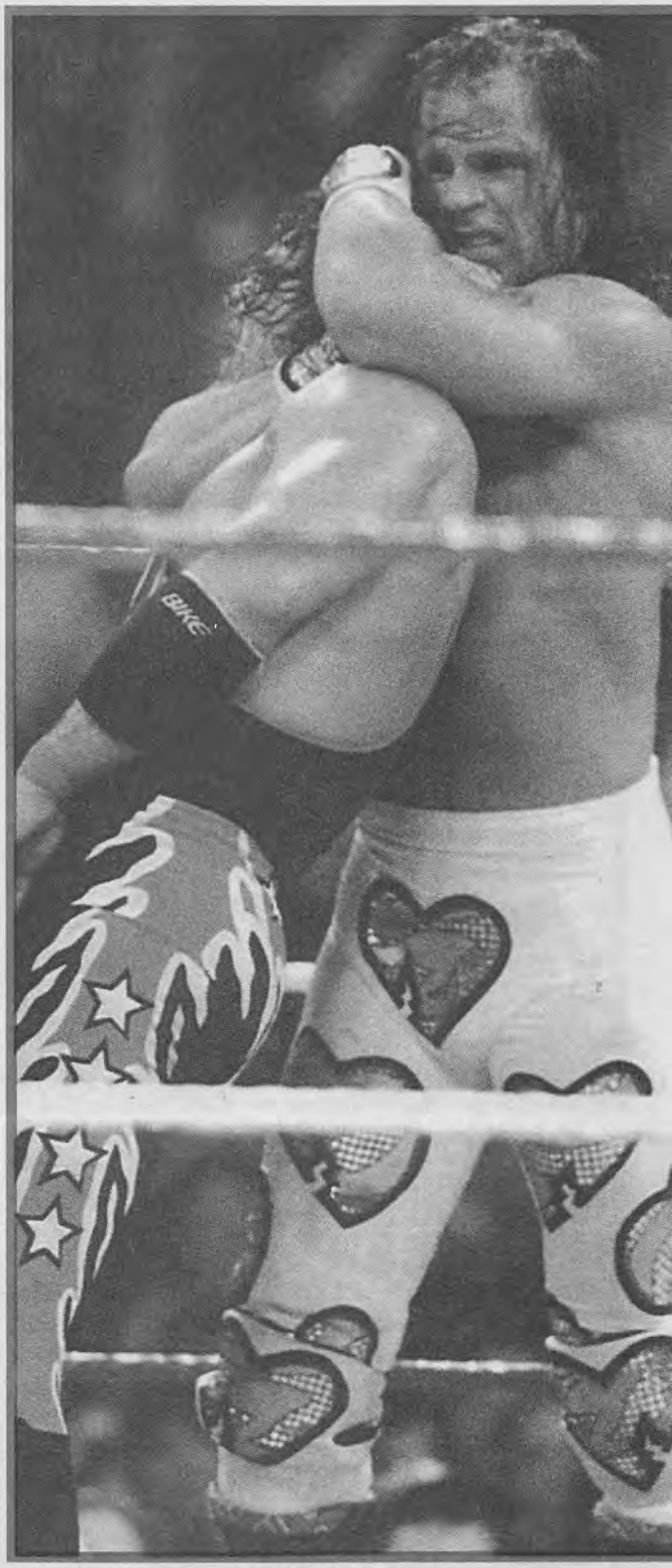
5. The Bodydonnas vs. The Godwinns. Keep your Sunny side up.

6. Steve Austin vs. Savio Vega. Savio still has a lot to learn.

7. Hunter Hearst Helmsley vs. The Ultimate Warrior. The long awaited Ultimate return lasts less than two minutes.

THANKS FOR COMING BACK ... WE REALLY MISSED YA!

Jeff Jarrett's return to the WWF at In Your House V was heralded by Jerry Lawler, who presented his friend with a gold CD encased in glass, which, according to Lawler, signified that Jarrett's CD, *Ain't I Great*, had sold 500,000 copies. "Double-J" stuck around to watch Ahmed Johnson defeat Buddy Landell, then joined Lawler in an insult-laden interview of Johnson. It didn't last very long. Jarrett smashed the gold CD over Ahmed's head and they brawled back to the dressing room. "Ain't he great?!" Lawler cooed. A month later at the Royal Rumble, "Double-J" broke a guitar over Ahmed's head and lost his match by disqualification.



Shawn vs. Bret

IT'S NOT LIKE IT WAS MEAN-SPIRITED OR ANYTHING. JUST SOME GOOD, HARMLESS FUN

The WWF kicked off the new year by taking its first public shots at WCW on the January 1 *WWF Monday Night Raw*. A skit depicted a WCW board meeting with characters called "The Huckster" (a skinny man dressed like Hulk Hogan), "The Nacho Man" (a Randy Savage lookalike), "Scheme Gene" (a Gene Okerlund takeoff), and "Billionaire Ted" (a Ted Turner lookalike). The skits eventually turned nasty with the WWF charging Turner with violation of federal anti-trust laws and a less-than-climactic "Huckster" vs. "Nacho Man" match at WrestleMania XII (both "died" in the ring). But on some slow nights, these skits were the best thing about *Raw*.

"The Huckster," "Billionaire Ted," and "The Nacho Man"

UPSET OF THE HALF-YEAR

Although we're reluctant to call any loss by Sid Vicious an upset—he simply loses too often to people he should beat—"Psycho" Sid's defeat at the hands of Bob "Spark Plugg" Holly on January 6 in New Haven, Connecticut, qualifies as a major surprise by any measure. Shortly afterward, Vicious pulled his annual disappearing act, but this time, he had a legitimate reason: a serious neck injury. He announced his retirement on a subsequent USWA telecast, but sources close to Sid now say he might attempt a comeback this summer.

A LIST OF THE BEST COMEBACKS SO FAR IN 1996

1. The Ultimate Warrior
2. Roddy Piper
3. Jake "The Snake" Roberts

THE GUEST WHO WOULDN'T LEAVE ...

The Royal Rumble traditionally has two winners, one official, one unofficial. The official winner is the man left standing in the ring at the end of the match. This year, that was Shawn Michaels, whose reward was a shot against WWF World champion Bret Hart at WrestleMania XII. The unofficial winner is the iron man, the

Hunter Hearst Helmsley

wrestler who lasts the longest in the ring. This year, that was Hunter Hearst Helmsley, who lasted 48 minutes, 1 second before getting eliminated. But don't bother standing up and cheering Mr. Helmsley, because he was hardly a factor. He eliminated nobody and spent most of his time fending off elimination.

... THE PATIENT WHO JUST REFUSED TO DIE ...

The real iron man of the Royal Rumble was Shawn Michaels, who lasted 26 minutes, 25 seconds and eliminated eight men, including Big Van Vader, Yokozuna, Davey Boy Smith, and Diesel. It was a spectacular performance for Michaels, who has won two straight Rumbles.

... AND THE GIFT HORSE'S FACE-VIEWER

The WWF invited Sabu to participate in the Royal Rumble. Sabu accepted and then declined. According to insiders, Sabu's then-manager, Paul E. Dangerously, was worried that some WWF wrestlers who might have taken offense to some of the WWF-bashing done in ECW would band together to try to injure Sabu.

INTRODUCING BRUTUS THE BARBER HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY

Hunter Hearst Helmsley sneak-attacked Duke "The Dumpster" Droese after a match on January 23 in White Plains, New York, and cut off a good portion of his hair.

BE CAREFUL OF WHAT YOU ASK FOR, BECAUSE YOU JUST MIGHT GET IT

Ahmed Johnson asked WWF President Gorilla Monsoon to lift Big Van Vader's suspension so he could get revenge on Vader. Johnson, who has idolized Monsoon since childhood, was mad at Vader for attacking the president on *Raw* one night after the Royal Rumble.

IN THE GREAT TRADITION OF JACK TUNNEY AND GORILLA MONSOON ...

"PIPER FAST BECOMING AN UNPOPULAR WWF PRESIDENT" read the headline in the February 19 issue of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated Weekly*. WWF wrestlers were enraged over Roddy Piper's decision to grant a title match to Tatanka in Bangalore, India. Yes, that's India, not Indiana.

YOU'RE ONCE, TWICE, THREE TIMES NOT A TITLE CONTENDER

Davey Boy Smith was quieted in embarrassing fashion when he lost to Shawn Michaels three times in one week this spring. So what did he do about it? He accused Michaels of propositioning his wife, Diana, at In Your House VII in April. His accusations led to him getting a title match with Michaels at In Your House VIII.

Diana Smith

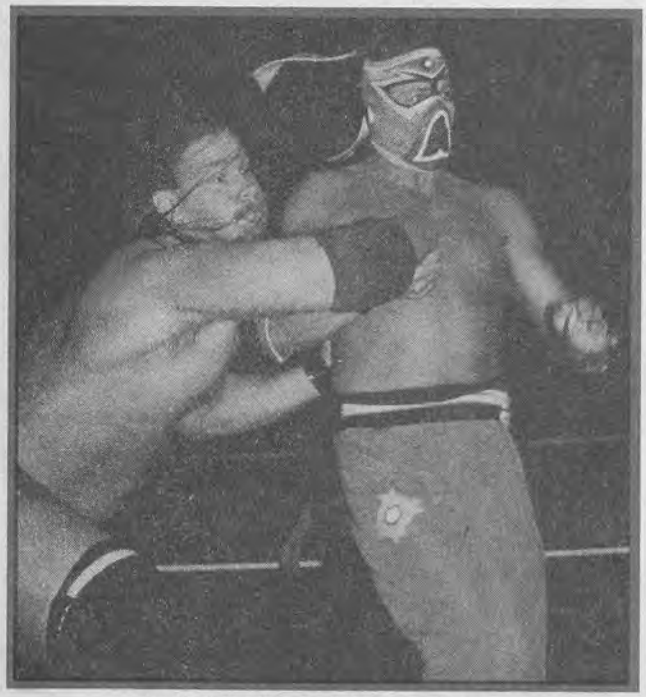
WWF MIDYEAR REPORT

YOU WANTED HIM ... YOU GOT HIM

Who says the mainstream media ignore wrestling? Conan O'Brien apparently took notice of Goldust and thought it might be fun to meet him and Marlena, so he invited them to be guests on his late-night talk show in March. They came on the show ... and Goldust wasted no time in making some very lewd comments to him. He hasn't been asked back yet.

YOU MEAN YOU WOULDN'T GIVE UP YOUR QUEST FOR THE ALL-JAPAN TRIPLE CROWN FOR THIS?

Newcomer Justin "Hawk" Bradshaw has heard WWF broadcasters compare him to legendary brawler Stan Hansen, who now wrestles in Japan, and Bradshaw apparently got caught up in all the hype. Rumor has it that he challenged Hansen to come to the WWF and wrestle him. Rumor also has it that Hansen ignored the challenge.



Justin "Hawk" Bradshaw vs. Avatar

WHO'S THE PAIN IN THE NECK?

When Billy Gunn of The Smokin' Gunns suffered a neck injury, Sunny, manager of The Bodydonnas, demanded that the Gunns be stripped of the WWF World tag team title. Not surprisingly, Sunny suggested that the belts be awarded to her team. Later, the title was vacated by the Gunns, and a tournament was held to declare new champions.

IT'S WHAT YOU'D CALL A REAL BREAK-THROUGH MATCH

The Undertaker apparently hid under the ring for the entire In Your House VI card on February 18 so that he could tear through the mat and interfere in Diesel's World title match against Bret Hart. While The Undertaker was working his magic on Diesel, Hart left the cage and got the victory.

HE'S NOT A KID—HE'S AN INFANT!

Razor Ramon force-fed a giant baby bottle to The 1-2-3 Kid and diapered him after the "Bad Guy" beat The Kid at In Your House VI.

BUT "RING MASTER" WAS SUCH A COOL NAME

After wrestling for several months in the WWF as Ted DiBiase's "Ring Master," Steve Austin started using the name "Stone-Cold" Steve Austin. We think he could do just fine without the "Stone-Cold" part, though we do like the way he has perfected DiBiase's old "Million-Dollar Dream" finisher.

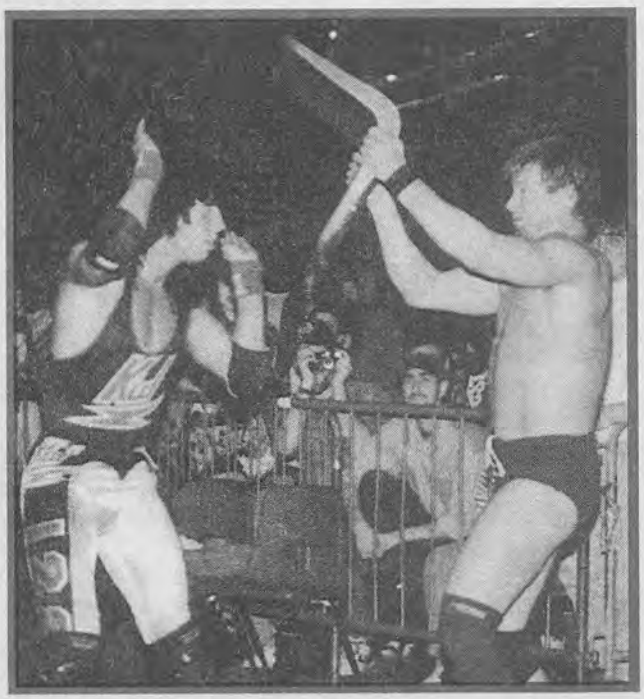
THE MOST USED EXIT DOOR IN WRESTLING HISTORY

Having already lost Hulk Hogan, Randy Savage, Alundra "Madusa" Blayze, Brutus Beefcake, Bobby Heenan, Gene Okerlund, Jimmy Hart, Hacksaw Duggan, and Lex Luger to WCW, the WWF suffered

another blow in early-March when Diesel announced that he would leave the federation at the conclusion of his current contract (it was to expire on June 6) and return to WCW. Diesel agreed to honor his existing commitments prior to leaving the WWF in early-June. Around the same time, the WWF found out that Razor Ramon had similar plans.

IS HE A PRESIDENT OR A WRESTLER ... OR NEITHER?

Acting WWF President Roddy Piper stunned fans in Pittsburgh and East Rutherford, New Jersey, when he substituted for Razor Ramon in matches against The 1-2-3 Kid this winter. Piper won both matches.



Roddy clobbers The Kid

SO MUCH FOR THIS FRIENDSHIP

Diesel attacked his friend, or former friend, Shawn Michaels during a tag team match at Madison Square Garden on March 17 and hit him across the back with a chair. Diesel and Michaels were wrestling Bret Hart and The Undertaker, but the match turned into a Hart vs. Michaels one-on-one when Diesel and Undertaker brawled back to the dressing room area. Later, both returned to the ring, and Diesel hit Michaels.

THE SLAMMYS: TWO HOURS OF ZANY FUN ... AND A LITTLE SERIOUSNESS

Sunny won a Slammy for Best Buns ... Jim Cornette was flabbergasted when he won the Blue Light Special For Fashion Flop ... and Vince McMahon paid tribute to Fred Blassie before presenting him with the Lifetime Achievement Award. These were just some of the highlights of the WWF's Slammy Awards, held one night before WrestleMania. There were quite a few laughs and smiles on this night ... like when Sunny asked Henry and Phineas Godwinn and Hillbilly Jim if they wanted to see exactly why she won best buns. They said yes, but she was just kidding. There was also some tension between Bret Hart and Shawn Michaels. "The Hitman" didn't seem to like the fact that Shawn won four Slammys to his three. And before the night was through, both Todd Pettengill, the host of the show, and Ahmed Johnson, who won for 1995 New Sensation of the Squared Circle, took shots at WCW. Johnson referred to the WWF's rival as "Wheel Chair Wrestling."

"The Hitman" at the Slammys

WWF MIDYEAR REPORT

THEY'RE THE NEW WORLD TAG TEAM CHAMPIONS, NO IFS, ANDS, OR BUTTS ABOUT IT

The Bodydonnas won the WWF World tag team title tournament by beating Henry and Phineas Godwinn, but not without some shapely help from shapely manager Sunny. Skip was in trouble when Sunny flashed Phineas her shapely buns. Stunned, he forgot about finishing off Skip and got pinned seconds later.

Phineas gets an eyeful

THIS REMINDS US OF WHEN SGT. SLAUGHTER BECAME AN IRAQI

Mr. Fuji surprised everyone at WrestleMania XII by appearing in the corner of Yokozuna, Ahmed Johnson, and Jake Roberts and waving an *American* flag.

CONTROL MANKIND? EXPERTS HAVE BEEN TRYING TO DO THAT FOR YEARS

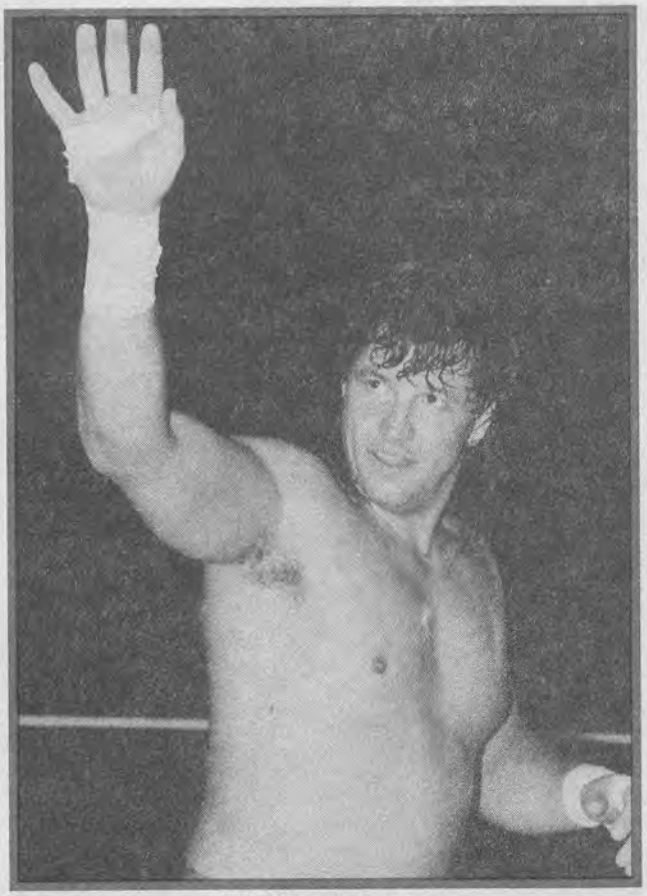
Actually, the Mankind the wrestlers were referring to was Cactus Jack, who is going under the name Mankind in the WWF. And they're mad because they say Mankind's submission hold, in which he jams two taped fingers into an opponent's esophagus, is actually an illegal chokehold. WWF President Gorilla Monsoon chose not to outlaw the move, which might come in handy if Mankind ever wrestles long-time arch-rival and punisher Big Van Vader.

THE REALIZATION OF A DREAM

Just months after doctors feared his career was over because of injuries suffered in an attack outside a Syracuse, New York, nightclub, Shawn Michaels won the WWF World title with a victory over Bret Hart at WrestleMania XII. The victory ended Michaels' 12-year quest for the belt.

LET'S JUST KISS AND SAY GOODBYE

Roddy Piper was so enraged by Goldust's advances that he challenged him to a Hollywood backlot brawl at WrestleMania XII. The match started in a Hollywood backlot, where Piper beat Goldust with a baseball bat and Goldust tried to run over Piper, continued with a chase through the streets of Anaheim, California, and finally finished in the ring at Arrowhead Pond, where Piper stripped Goldust down to his bustier and garter belt. Goldust couldn't believe Piper was so upset. Most people would have been flattered, right?



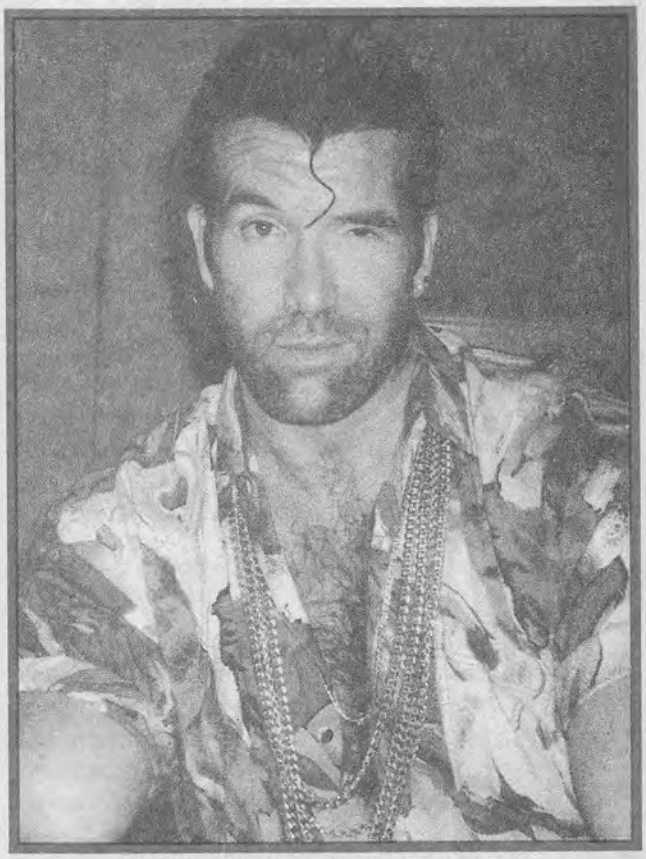
Al "Leif Cassidy" Snow

NO OFFENSE, AL ... UH, I MEAN LEIF, BUT YOU'RE A GEEK!

For more than a decade in the independents, Al Snow was a very good, though not particularly flashy wrestler. When he thought he needed to find a way to get ahead in the WWF, he took the name Leif Cassidy and formed a team called The New Rockers with Marty Jannetty. Now he spends as much time jumping up and down and smiling that goofy smile of his as he does wrestling.

THE WOMEN JUST LOVE HIM ...

While wrestling as Johnny B. Badd in WCW late last year, Marc Mero rescued Kimberly, the former Diamond Doll, from "Diamond" Dallas Page, who often treated her very poorly. The first thing he did upon joining the WWF was defend the honor of the lovely Sable, who had been on the arm of Hunter Hearst Helmsley. She now accompanies Mero to ringside.



The "Bad Guy" was "unprofessional"?

AND THAT MEANS?

Razor Ramon missed WrestleMania XII after being handed a six-week suspension for "unprofessional conduct".

AHMED OR AH-MAD?

Even though he didn't lose a single singles match in his first six months in the WWF, Ahmed Johnson still couldn't get a title shot. Instead, he got caught up in a strange feud with Davey Boy Smith in which the two clashed in a series of arm-wrestling matches. Sources said Ahmed was getting very frustrated by his inability to get title matches. Just for the record, he did start his career as the rulebreaking Moadib in Texas.

WWF MIDYEAR REPORT

SO FAR, IT'S BEEN A GOOD YEAR. HERE'S ONE—NOT THE USUAL THREE—STORY THE WWF COULD HAVE LIVED WITHOUT

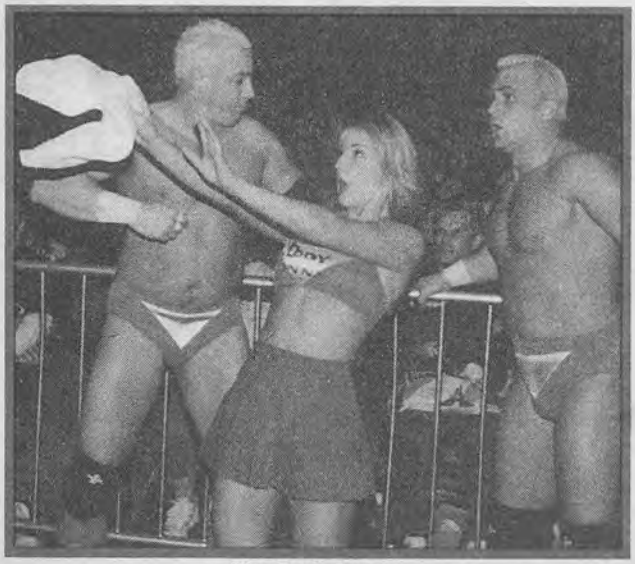
1. Rick and Scott Steiner and The Road Warriors return to the ring ... in WCW.

WRESTLER OF THE HALF-YEAR

Shawn Michaels. "The Heartbreak Kid" rebounded from what was supposed to be a career-threatening injury to win the Royal Rumble, then captured the WWF World title from Bret Hart in a dynamic "Iron Man" match at WrestleMania XII. He's already the odds-on favorite for full-year all-federation honors.

TAG TEAM OF THE HALF-YEAR

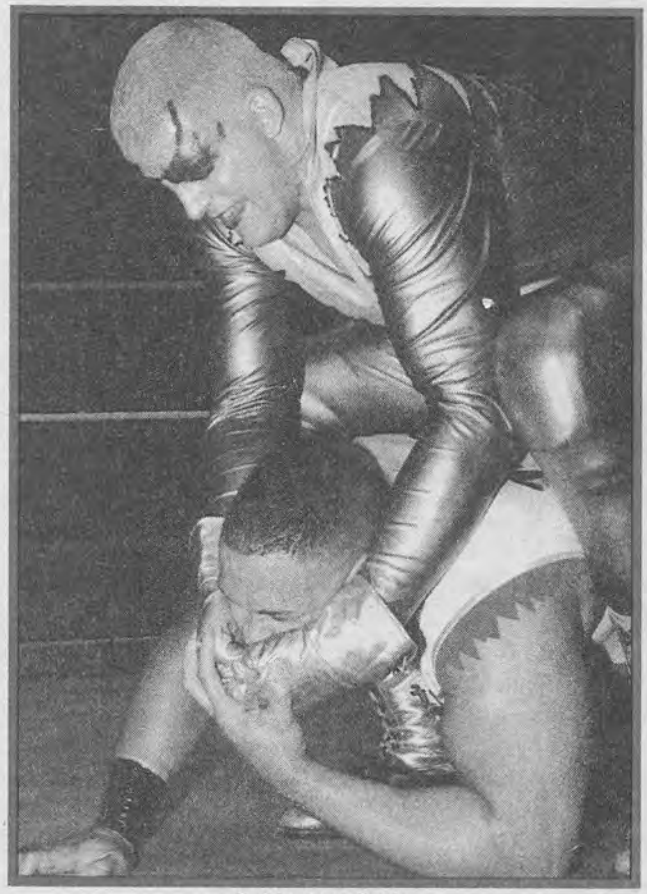
The Bodydonnas. Sure, they probably wouldn't be WWF World tag team champions right now if manager Sunny didn't have such a nice derriere, but the fact is Skip and Zip—a.k.a. Chris Candido and Tom Prichard—are two talented wrestlers who could dominate the WWF tag team scene for a while.



The Bodydonnas

MATCH OF THE HALF-YEAR

Savio Vega vs. Goldust, March 17, Madison Square Garden. Vega was only a foot away from pinning Goldust for the Intercontinental title in a wild battle. Goldust retained the belt despite the fact that he got pummeled by a determined Vega. Vega had Goldust pinned, but Marlena placed Goldust's foot on the bottom rope. The match was restarted, and Goldust struck Vega with the belt for the pin. First runner-up: Shawn Michaels vs. Bret Hart at WrestleMania XII.



Goldust vs. Savio

MANAGER OF THE HALF-YEAR

Sunny. Here's the deal: Skip was struggling ... really struggling. His WWF tenure looked like it would be very short, so Sunny got desperate and paired him with Tom Prichard, now known as Zip. Skip and

Zip, The Bodydonnas, won the WWF World tag team title, thanks to a little help from Sunny and her harvest moon.

MOST HATED WRESTLER OF THE HALF-YEAR

Goldust. Call it homophobia, if you must, but there are a lot of reasons to dislike Goldust, and none of them has to do with his advances on Roddy Piper, Savio Vega, The Undertaker, or Razor Ramon. Face it: It's hard to like a man who tried to run over Roddy Piper with a Cadillac.

HOW OUR SECOND-HALF PREDICTIONS FOR 1995 FARED

(From THE WRESTLER, September 1995)

1. **Shawn Michaels will win the World title from Diesel ... and they'll shake hands afterward.** Well, Shawn won the World title (in '96) and he beat Diesel in World title matches, but they didn't shake hands after any of their matches. Close enough, right?

2. **Lawrence Taylor will sign a part-time contract with the federation and win the Intercontinental title from Jeff Jarrett.** Last we heard, Taylor was talking about returning to the NFL.

3. **LT vs. Shawn at SummerSlam '95.** We were just a little off here.

4. **The Steiners will finally return and win the World tag team title from Davey Boy Smith and Lex Luger, who will have won the title from Owen Hart and Yokozuna.** No, but they might win the *WCW* World tag title soon.

5. **Bob Backlund will retire.** We're still waiting Backlund.

MOST POPULAR WRESTLER OF THE HALF-YEAR

Shawn Michaels. Any doubts? Then take out that videotape of WrestleMania XII and listen to the ovation Shawn received after winning the World title. Michaels is an outrageous hit with female fans, and he's such a great wrestler that male fans like him, too.

INSPIRATIONAL WRESTLER OF THE HALF-YEAR

Shawn Michaels. He bounced back from career-threatening injury to realize his lifelong dream. What's more inspirational than that?

Bob Backlund

SO, WITHOUT FURTHER ADO, FIVE PREDICTIONS FOR THE SECOND HALF OF 1996

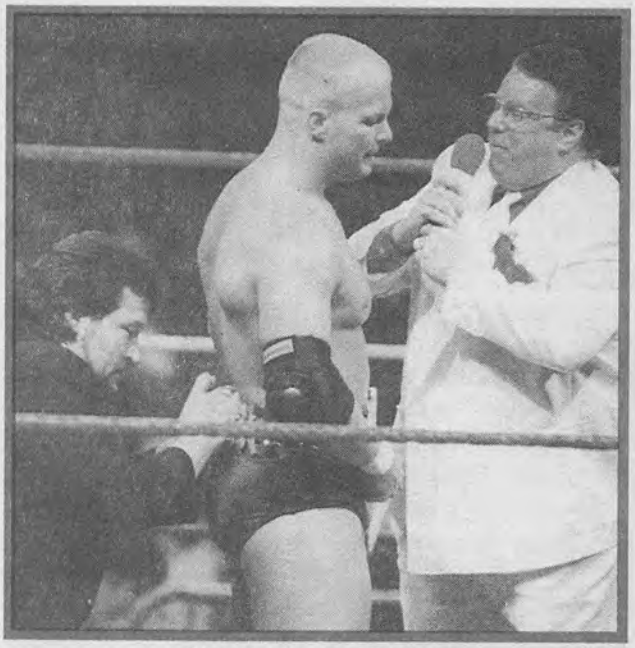
1. Shawn Michaels will retain the World title throughout the year. There's no stopping "The Heartbreak Kid" now.

2. The Ultimate Warrior will win the Intercontinental title. Just a matter of time. We thought he'd get the job done at In Your House VII.

3. The World tag team title will change hands at least three times. No team is strong enough to dominate right now.

4. Steve Austin will dump Ted DiBiase as his manager and be better off without him.

5. Gorilla Monsoon will step down as WWF president. The pressure is getting too heavy on the man.



Does Austin need DiBiase?

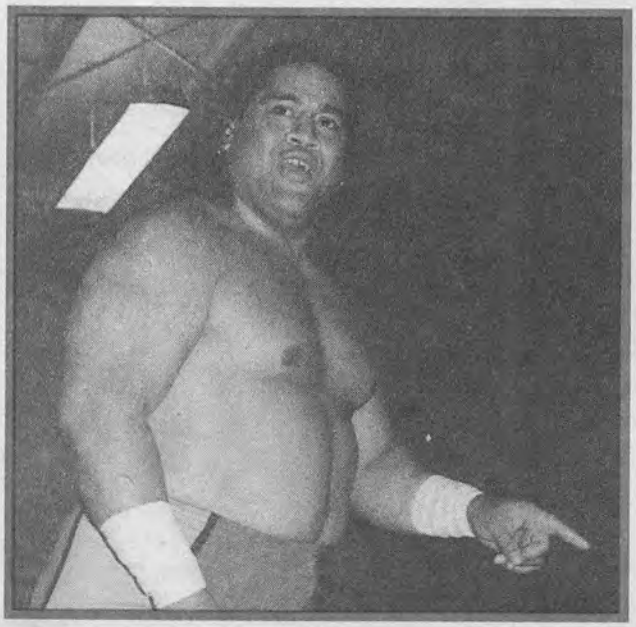
YOU PROBABLY WON'T BE HEARING A LOT FROM ...

1. Aldo Montoya
2. Barry Horowitz
3. Alex Porteau
4. Scott Taylor
5. Bob Holly

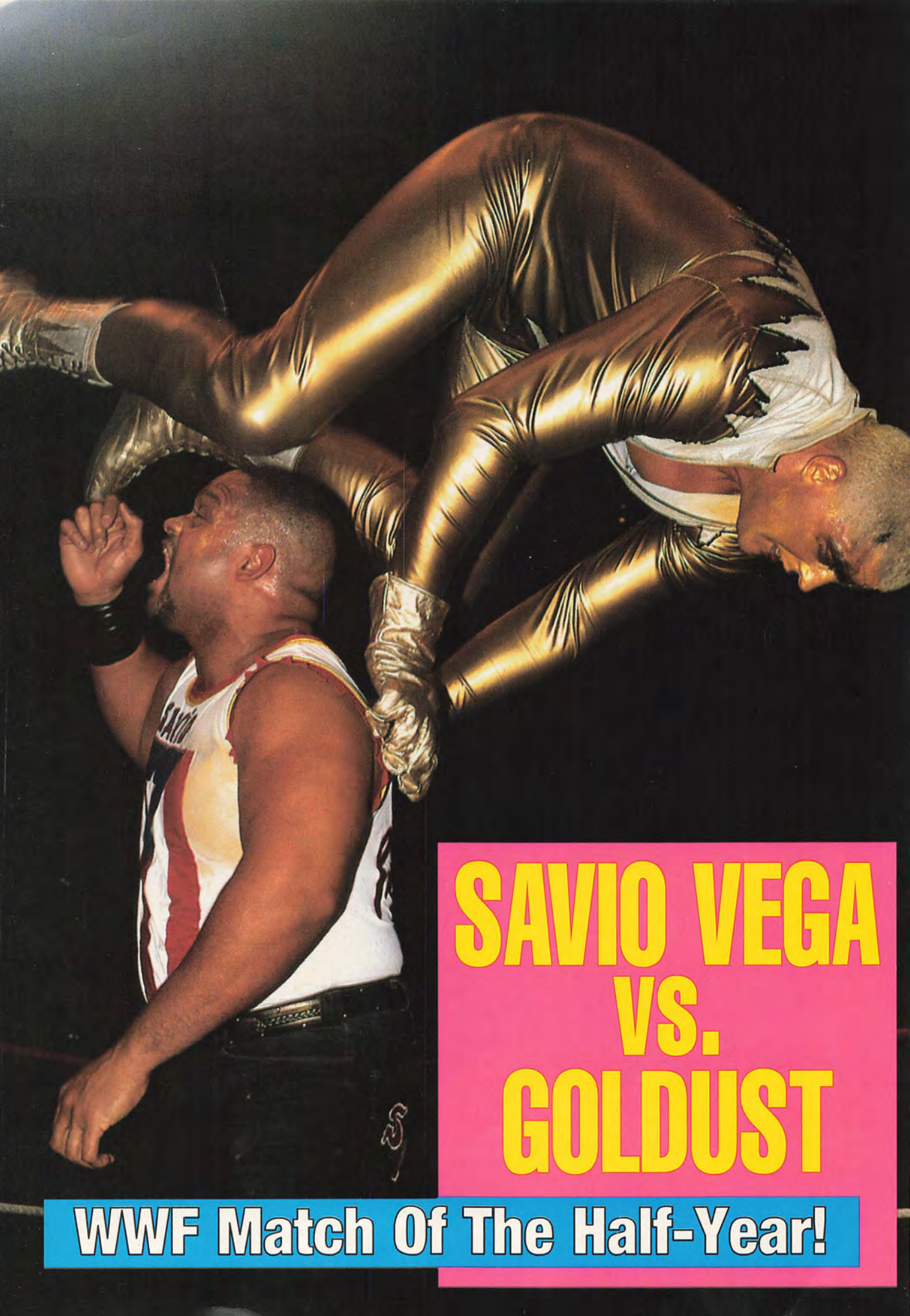
Aldo Montoya

BUT KEEP AN EYE OPEN FOR ...

1. Leif Cassidy
2. Justin Bradshaw
3. Marc Mero
4. Fatu



Fatu

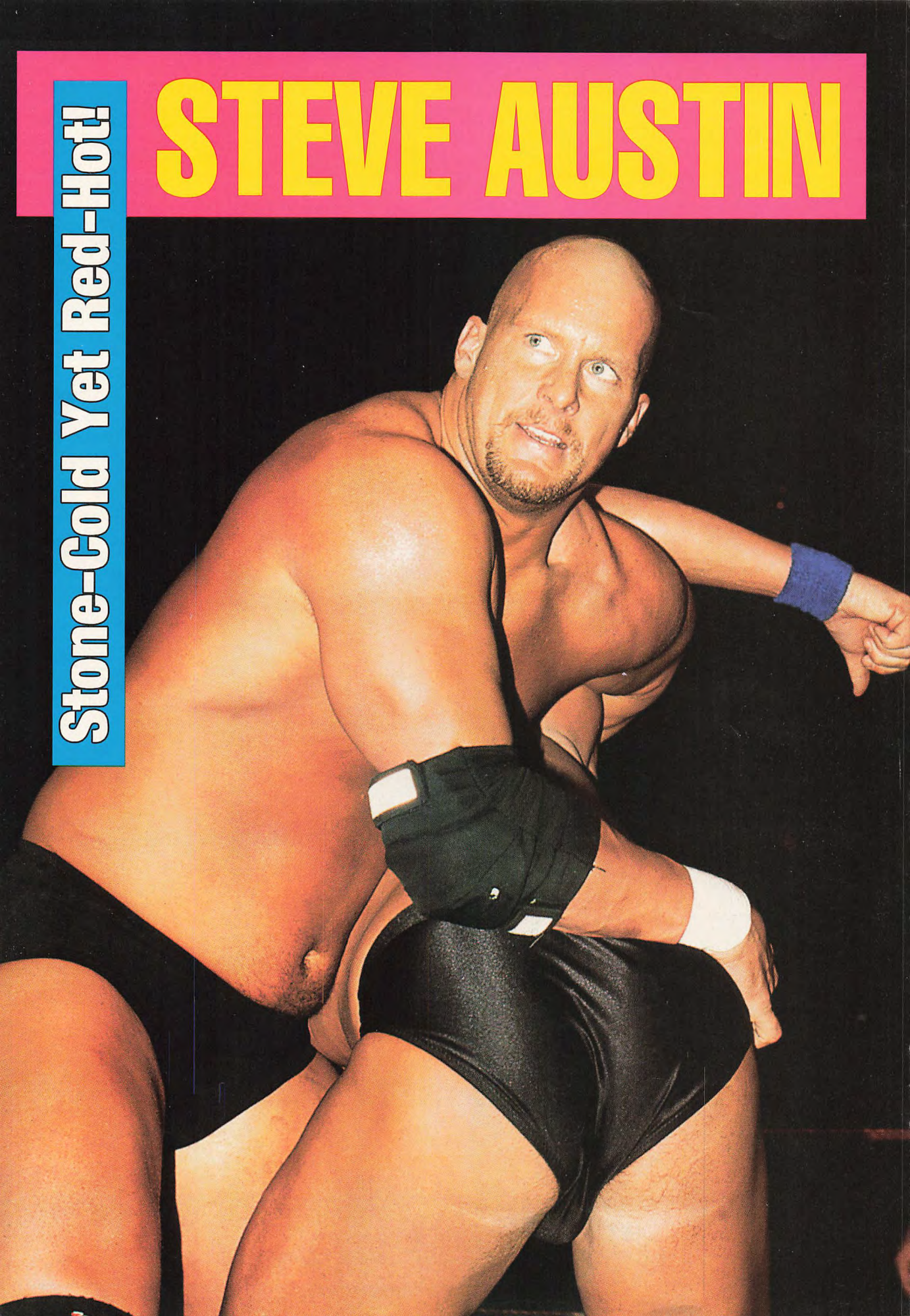


SAVIO VEGA VS. GOLDUST

WWF Match Of The Half-Year!

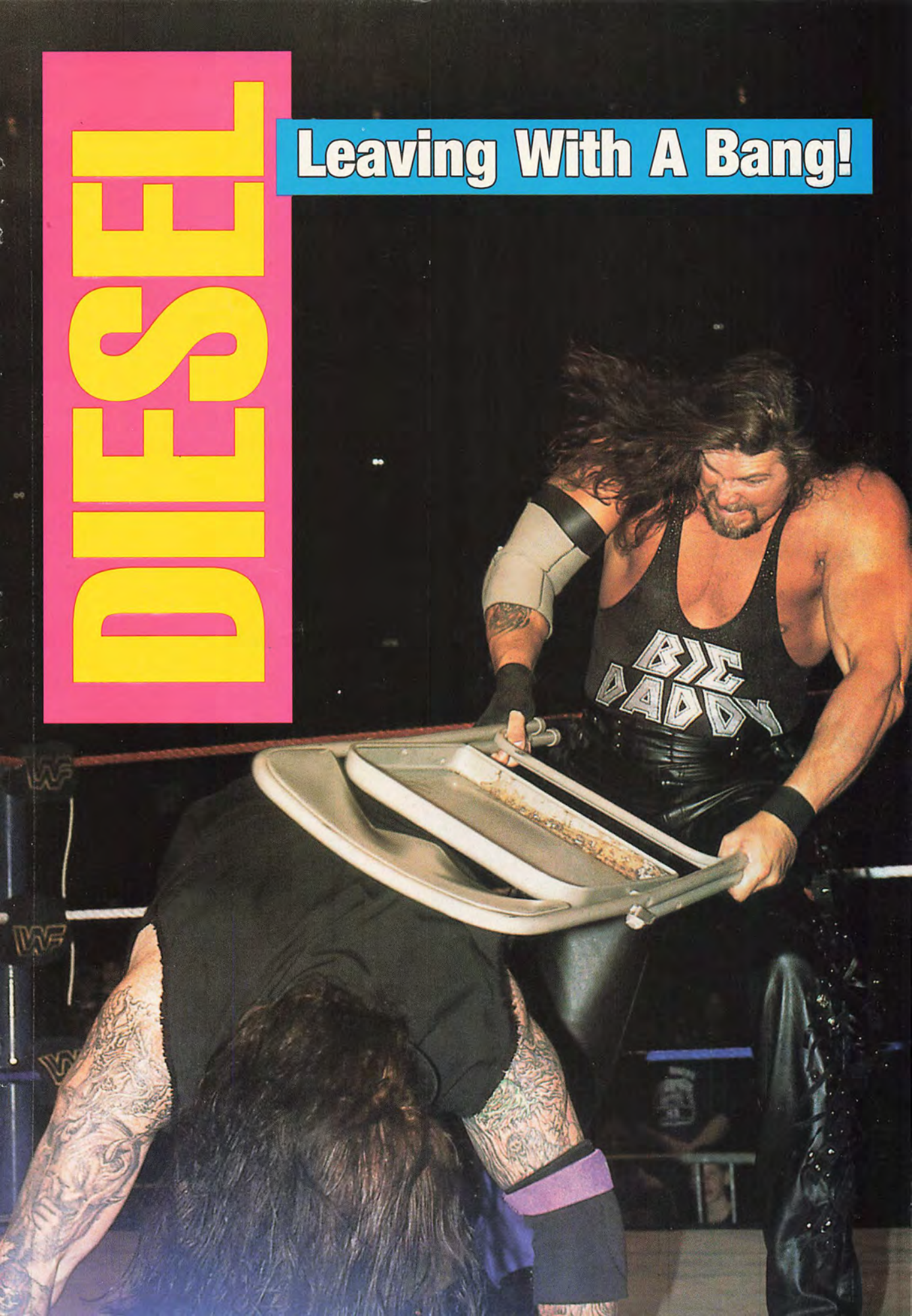
STEVE AUSTIN

Stone-Cold Yet Red-Hot!



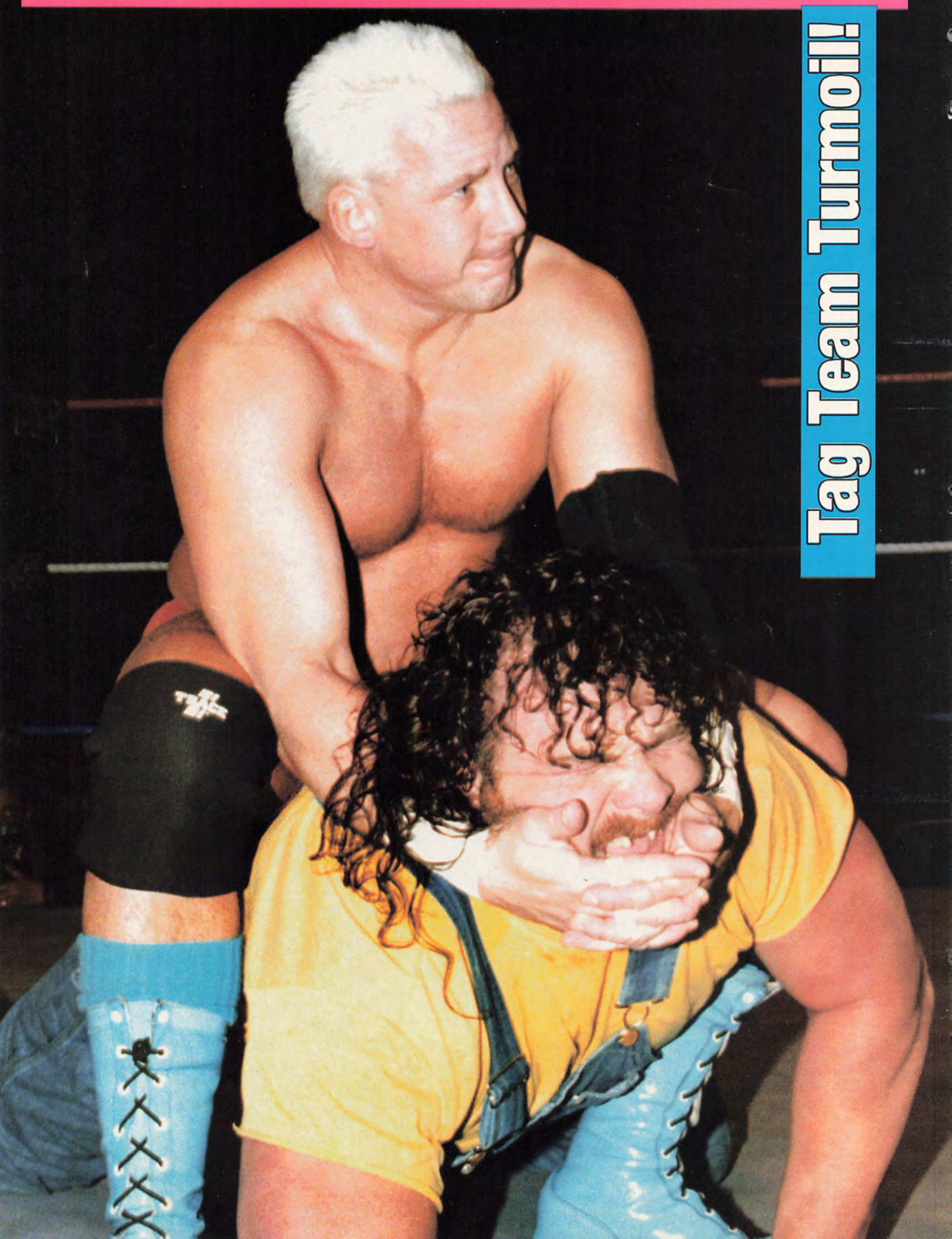
DIESEL

Leaving With A Bang!

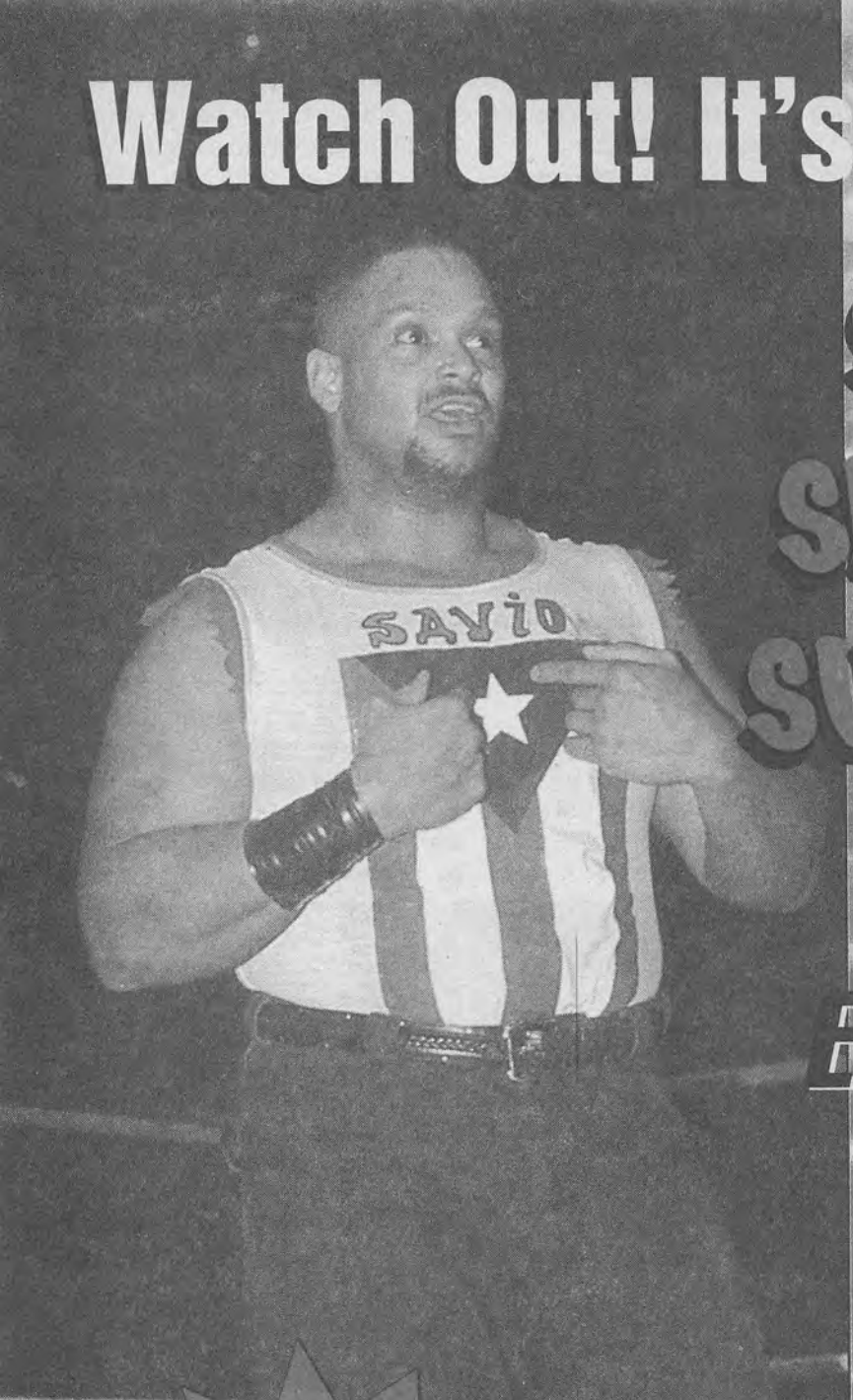


BODYDONNAS vs. GODWINNS

Tag Team Turmoil!



Watch Out! It's Coming!



SAVIO'S SIZZLING SUMMER

... And Everyone's Gonna Be Burned!

The fans love him, he's getting better with every match, and he's already come *so* close to winning a title in the WWF. Superstardom could be just a steamy season away for Savio Vega!

By Bryan Ethier

A TANTALIZING WOMAN with a pouting face and the glare of a hungry fox. A somber man with a stone-cold heart, bearing a shimmering gold belt. A referee with a wandering eye. And a hero unjustly robbed by all three.

These are your clues. Link these four together and you have the storyline behind this chapter of the mystery thriller called *The Savio Vega Story*.

Savio Vega was sensational in a series of matches with Goldust this spring, but he never could wrest the Intercontinental belt from him. Don't expect him to give up on his quest for gold anytime soon.

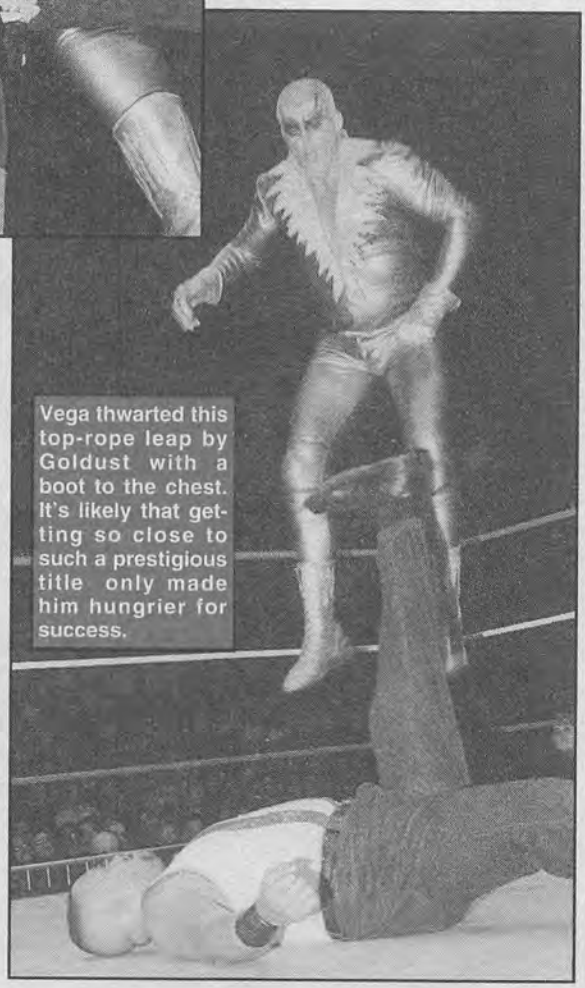
The tale does not begin at chapter one, but rather at chapter six of this never-ending story.

It is a cool night in April, weeks before the dogwoods bloom and the marigolds spring up across the awakening countryside. Mother Nature has yet to release her cold cruel hands from the throats of these continental states. The cool weather serves as an apt setting for this portion of the Vega story. For on this early-spring evening, Mother Nature will not be the only force mistreating Savio Vega.

As Andy Warhol said, "Every man enjoys 15 minutes of fame in his lifetime." On this night, Vega will finally taste fame after toiling in virtual WWF anonymity for more than a year. It will be so, he concludes, because his time has come.

Earlier that evening, Vega found himself thrust into fame's spotlight, only to have WWF President Gorilla Monsoon extinguish the light. During a match with Goldust, Vega hammered the androgynous one with his own gold Intercontinental belt and pinned him. Did we have a new I-C champ? Vega thought so. Monsoon didn't. He declared the title held up, citing interference by Marlena and illegal tactics employed by Vega. He ordered a rematch later that night.

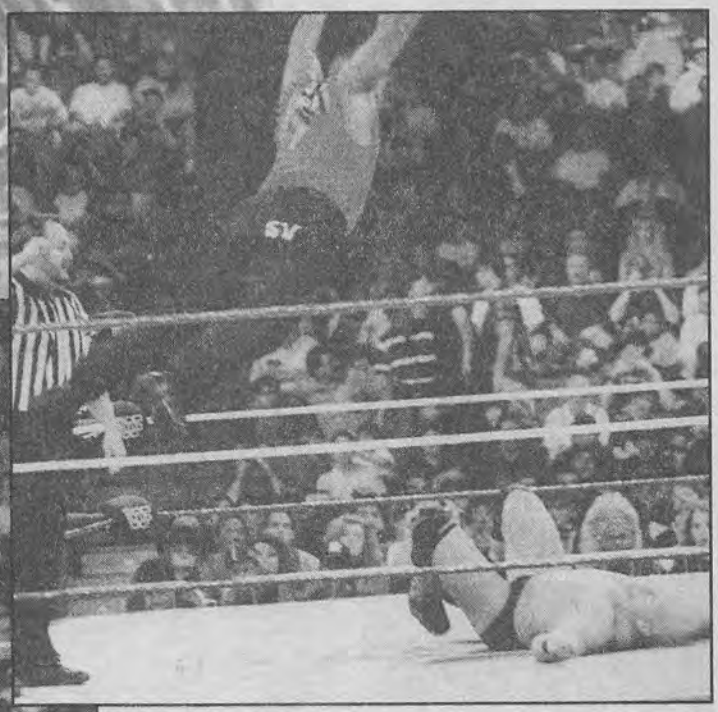
The second title match was a war. For Goldust, it turned out to be just another night of treachery and underhanded tactics. But not for Vega. In that rematch, Vega learned that war can truly be hell.



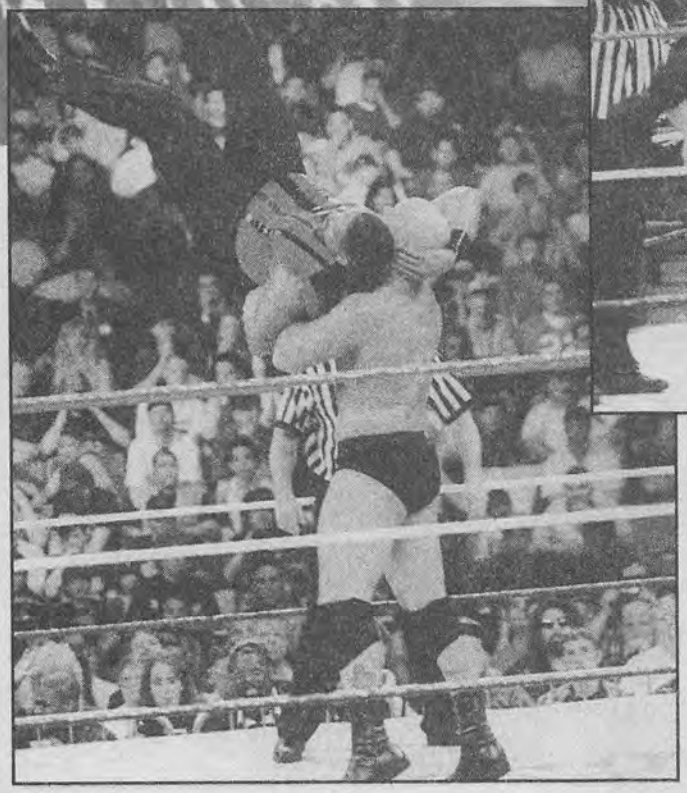
Vega thwarted this top-rope leap by Goldust with a boot to the chest. It's likely that getting so close to such a prestigious title only made him hungrier for success.

After a lengthy slugfest between the two, Vega appeared to have the match and title won when he rolled up Goldust. One problem: Marlena stood on the ring apron and distracted the referee, who had no clue Vega was poised for the win. And while she did her best Marilyn Monroe wink and wiggle at the official, Steve Austin leaped into the ring and cracked Vega over the head with his Million-Dollar belt. That enabled Goldust to spring free and pin Vega.

Suddenly, wrestling's spotlight went black above Vega's



The Latin sensation had both his ups (right) and his downs (below) against Steve Austin at WrestleMania XII, but Austin won the bout after smashing him with his Million-Dollar belt. The fact that his opponents often must cheat to beat him says a lot about Vega's ability.



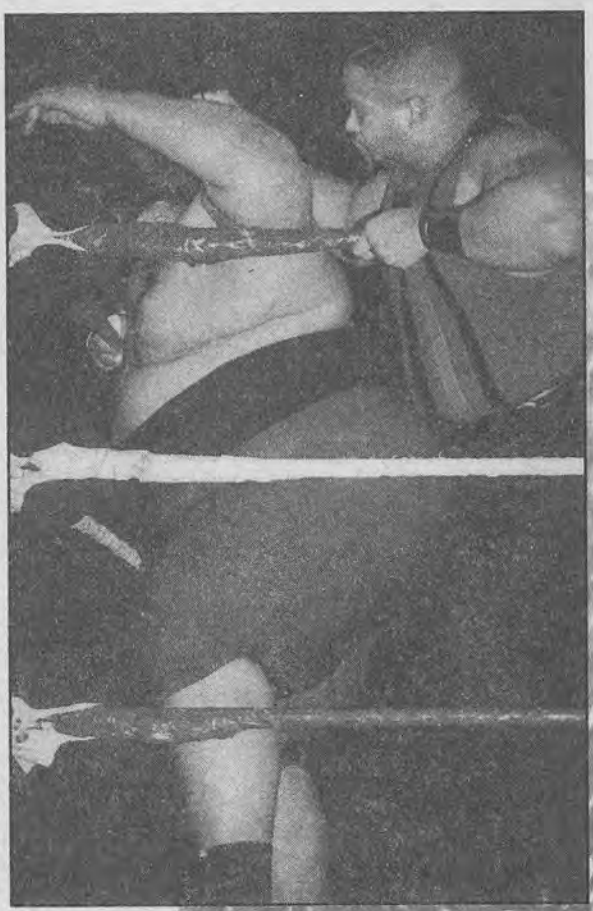
head. This loss symbolized the past fortunes of this talented grappler from Vega Alta, Puerto Rico. He has been on the cusp of wrestling success before, only to have victory torn away by jealous hands. In a sense, Vega's futile struggle should come as no surprise; while his opponents have used every method of trickery to gain wins, Vega has remained true to his high standards as a wrestler.

It all began at In Your House I, when a heretofore undistinguished Vega stormed into the ring and saved Razor Ramon from an attack by Jeff Jarrett and The Roadie. Overnight, Vega became a star. A friendship that began many years earlier in Puerto Rico had been revisited.

"His relationship with Razor Ramon earned him a lot of respect from the other wrestlers and the fans," explained former WWF star Bam Bam Bigelow. "Savio helped Razor fight all his rivals in spite of the sacrifice he had to make for his own body and career. His day will come, because he's a good man, a tough man, and an underrated athlete."

When will Vega's day come? Or has it already arrived? Certainly this master of tae-kwan do

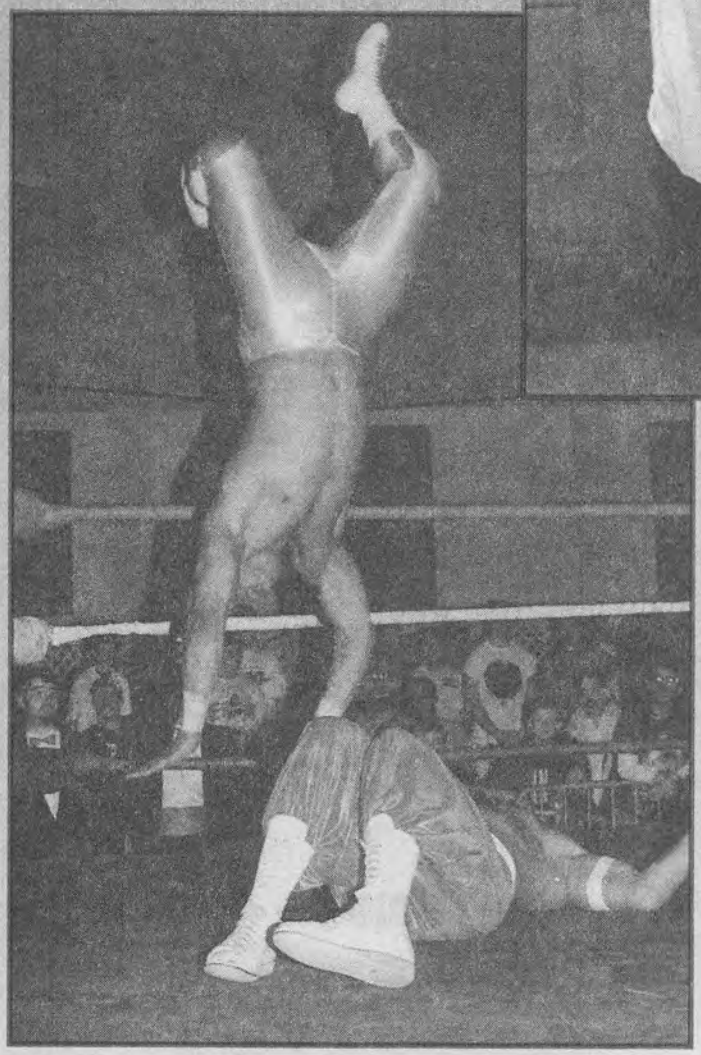
(Continued on page 78)

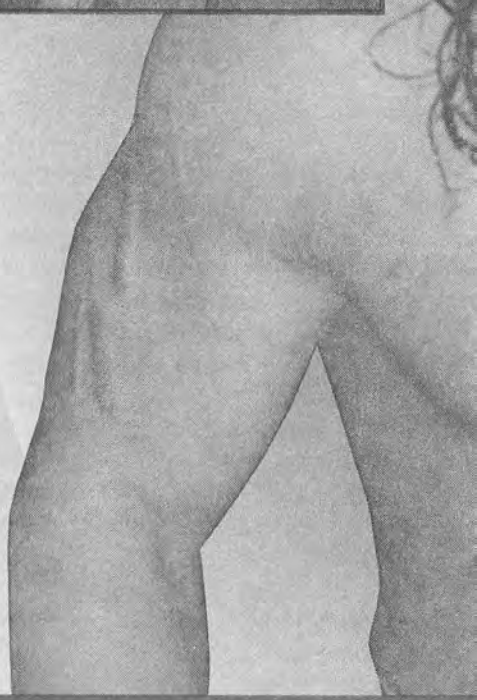


Vega did lose his share of matches in his first year in the WWF. However, he always willingly battled top-level stars such as Yokozuna. He knows that to be a superstar, he must be able to beat the best the WWF has to offer.

SABU *FLEES* FROM

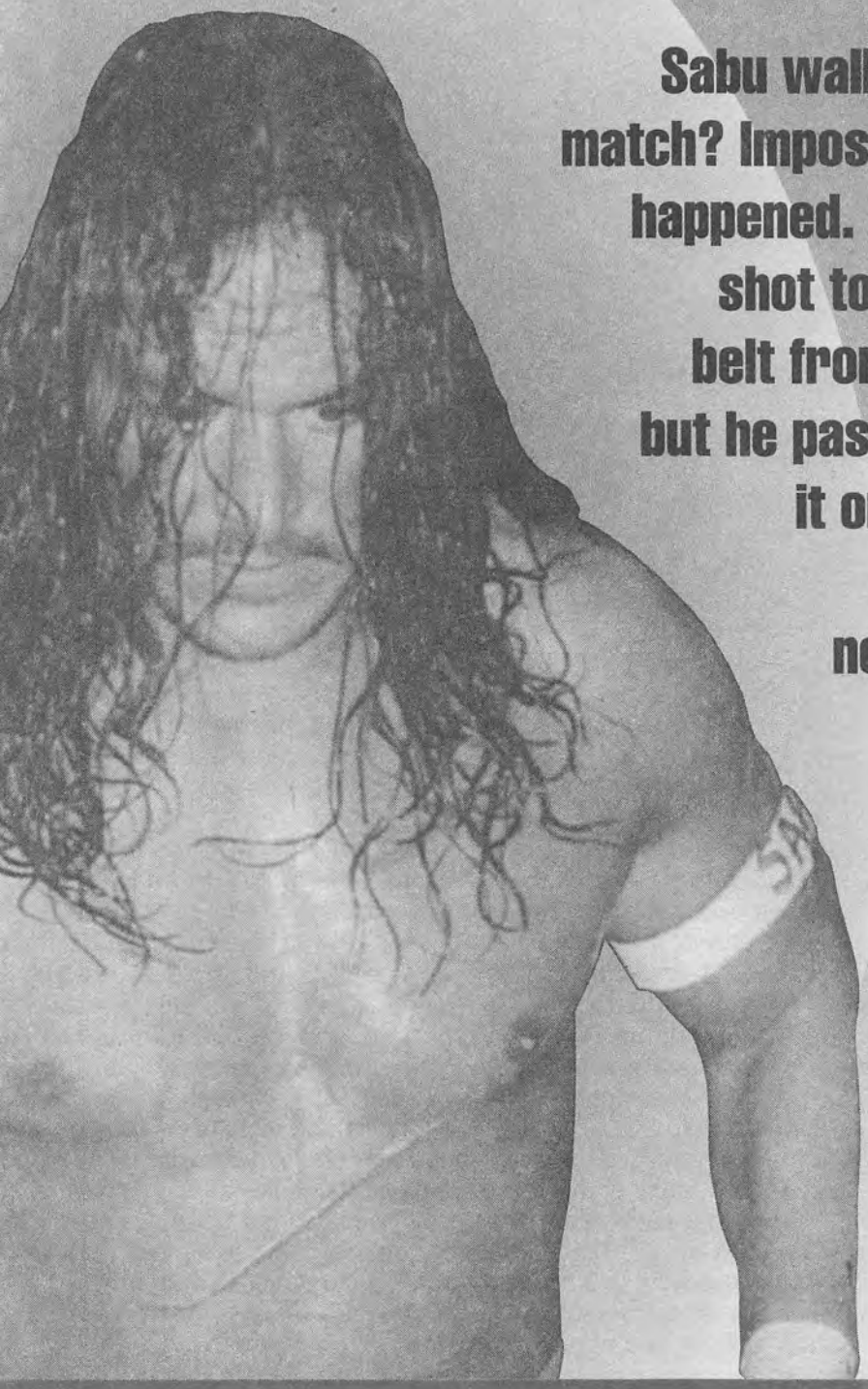
Even while Sabu was getting pounded by a 2 Cold Scorpio moonsault in Pennsylvania on April 19, (below) his mind was on his friend and mentor, The Sheik (right), who was undergoing hip replacement surgery in Michigan.





...It Had Nothing To

2 COLD SCORPIO



Sabu walking out on a title match? Impossible, you say? It happened. Sabu had a great shot to take the ECW TV belt from 2 Cold Scorpio, but he passed it up. Believe it or not, the savage grappler had the noblest of reasons

By Andy Rodriguez

NEWS FLASH: SABU has a heart! That may not become the next big headline in your local newspaper, but to a wrestling fan, it's huge news. For years, Sabu has been known for his amazing high-flying style, his recklessness, his fearlessness, and his viciousness. He was never known for being kind to his fellow man, though.

That may change.

Do With Cowardice

On April 19 in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, Sabu squared off once again against ECW TV champion 2 Cold Scorpio. Before the bout, Scorpio told everyone he was tired of giving Sabu title matches. He said this match would be Scorpio's last chance to capture the gold.

That sounded fine to Sabu. He was confident he could take 2 Cold, even if he wasn't completely focused on this bout.

It says something about the ability and determination of Sabu that he was able to wrestle so brilliantly that night despite the distraction. He executed some amazing over-the-top-rope maneuvers against Scorpio (above and below left).

He wasn't focused because his mentor, The Sheik, was in a bad way. In the days leading up to the contest with Scorpio, Sheik was preparing to have hip replacement surgery. This was serious stuff, and Sabu justifiably was concerned, especially since the injury that forced the surgery occurred as Sheik was seconding Sabu at WCW's Halloween Havoc last year.

"Sabu felt a great deal of responsibility for Sheik's condition," said Admahr Harrah, Sabu's interpreter. "He knows Sheik wouldn't be in this spot if he hadn't been there for Sabu. That really weighed on Sabu."

So that was Sabu's somber state of mind as he climbed through the ropes that night. He was determined to capture the championship, but his heart was elsewhere. For 20 minutes, though, it was hard to tell.

Sabu wrestled brilliantly. He took many of the same risks that have made him famous. And he did it for The Sheik, who was lying in a hospital in Detroit as the match went on.

"Sabu isn't the kind of guy who dedicates things to people," said ECW's Tommy Dreamer. "He only cares about himself. But before the match, his people said he was dedicating this night to The Sheik. You don't expect that from Sabu."

It was a wild match, the kind Sabu loves. Everything went right with it, except the result. Twenty minutes expired, and the match was declared a time-limit draw. That means the champion walks out the champion, and the challenger walks out hoping he gets another shot.

But on this strange night, Scorpio, the *champ*, asked for five more minutes.

"I was shocked!" said Shane Douglas. "What the hell was Scorpio thinking? You don't mess around with Sabu. I thought Scorpio had completely lost it!"

"I felt good that night," Scorpio explained. "I'd just lasted 20 minutes with one of the toughest guys in this business—after myself—and I still had my belt. I was set on making this Sabu's last shot, so I figured I'd make sure his last shot was a clean, embarrassing loss."

That was a shock, but here's a bigger one: Sabu said no!

Instead of facing the challenge, as he naturally would be expected to do, Sabu thought about it for a second, then walked back to the

Sabu and Sheik don't just have a student-teacher relationship, they've also been occasional tag team partners a few times over the years. Success in the ring doesn't mean nearly as much to Sabu as the well-being of The Sheik.

dressing room.

"I couldn't believe it!" said Vinnie Maldonado of Philadelphia, who calls himself the world's greatest Sabu fan. "I thought Sabu would jump at the chance to beat the crap out of this punk for five more minutes and take the belt. I thought I must have had the guy pegged all wrong. Here I was, thinking he was fearless, and it turns out he's a coward!"

Most of the fans in attendance felt the same way. The crowd started murmuring. What's the story with Sabu, they wondered. What's wrong with him?

Nothing, it turns out. He just had a very important phone call to make.

Don't laugh. He wasn't calling his girlfriend or his bookie. He was calling that man who has had such a tremendous influence on his career. He was calling The Sheik.

"Sheik's surgery took longer than they expected, I guess," said Dreamer. "Sabu was anxious to find out his condition. I know that before the match, he tried calling the hospital, but for some reason, he couldn't get through. Then he had to get ready for his match."

After 20 minutes passed, Sabu couldn't wait any longer. Not even a shot at a title could prevent him from checking up on his mentor. He had to call back.

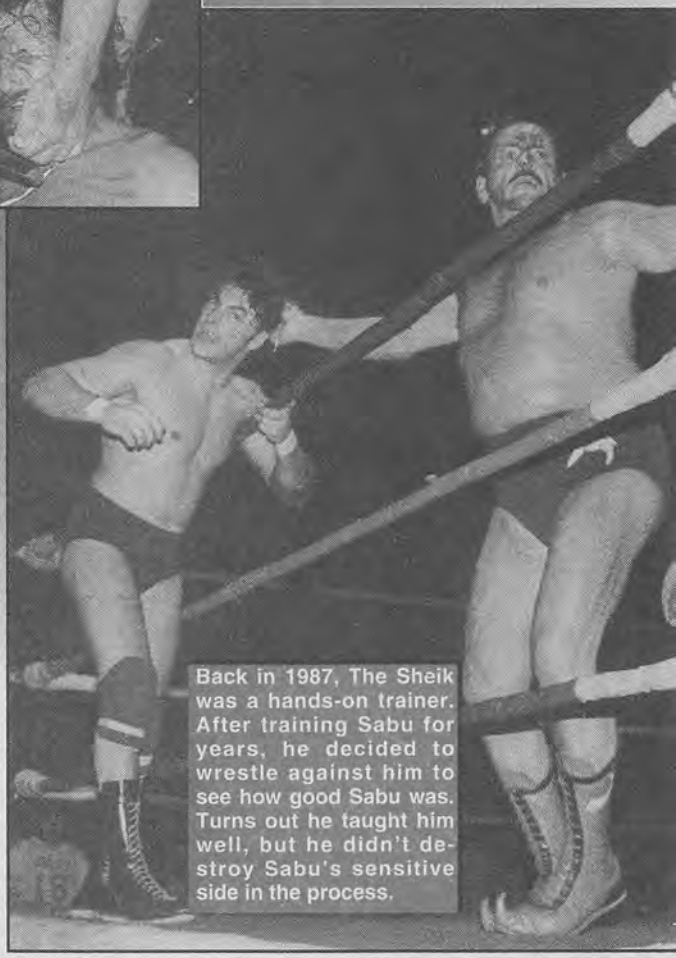
"When Sabu got back to the locker room area," said Mikey Whipwreck, "there was somebody using the pay phone. He just shoved the poor guy away. And Sabu had this look on his face like he was worried. I never saw him like that."

That look of worry, after a couple of minutes, changed to a look of relief. The news was good: The surgery was a success, and Sheik was resting comfortably. An angry man had dialed the phone; a happy man hung it up.

"That changed my attitude about Sabu," Scorpio said. "I can see why he did what he did. Maybe I'll even give him more title matches."

When the story got around, it changed a lot of people's attitude toward Sabu. Opponents who questioned his heart looked within themselves and decided they would have done the same thing.

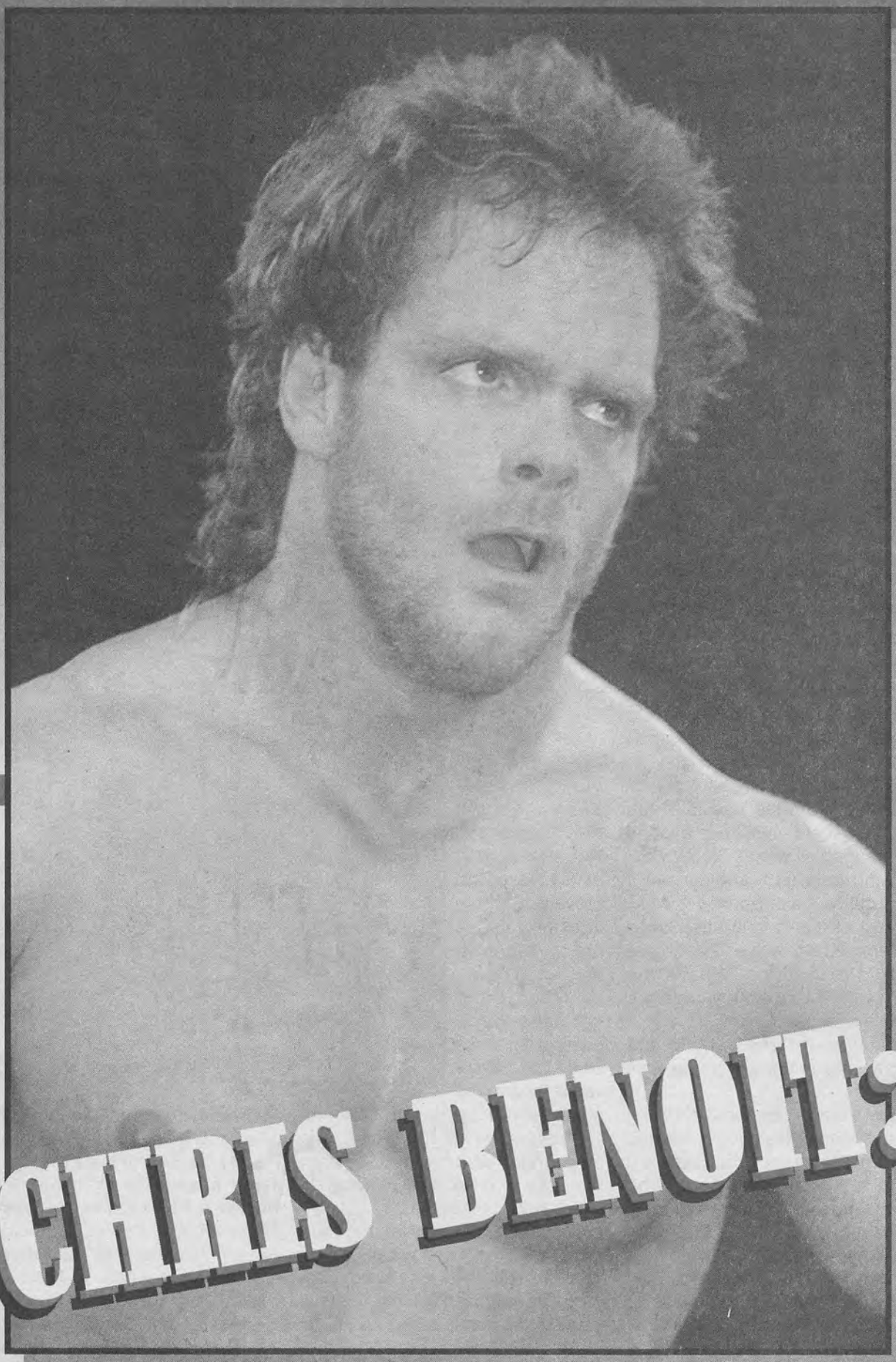
"Sabu didn't want anyone to make a big deal of this," Harrah said. "But he had to be there for Sheik."



Back in 1987, The Sheik was a hands-on trainer. After training Sabu for years, he decided to wrestle against him to see how good Sabu was. Turns out he taught him well, but he didn't destroy Sabu's sensitive side in the process.

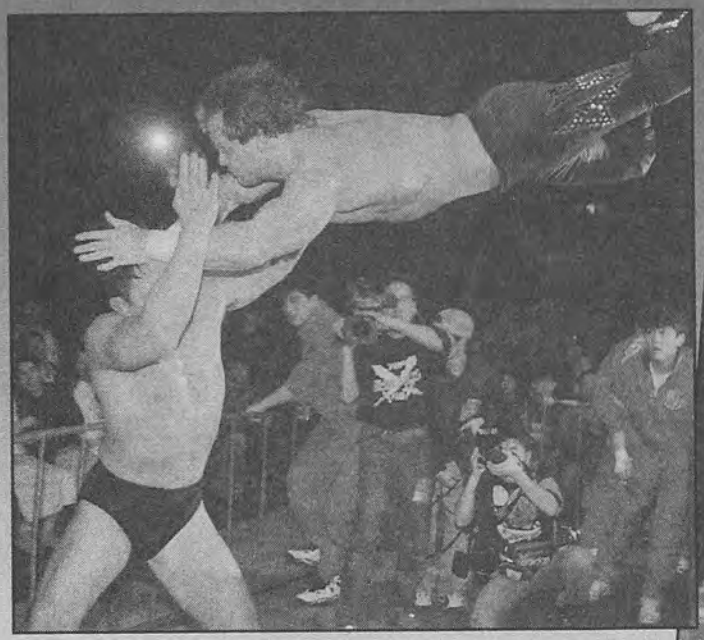
So Sabu responds to the same emotions we all do. He worries. He fears. He cares. But here's some advice for any opponent who might be thinking of taking advantage of Sabu's soft side: Get a ringside seat to Sabu's next match. Watch carefully. Then ask yourself this: *What was I thinking?*

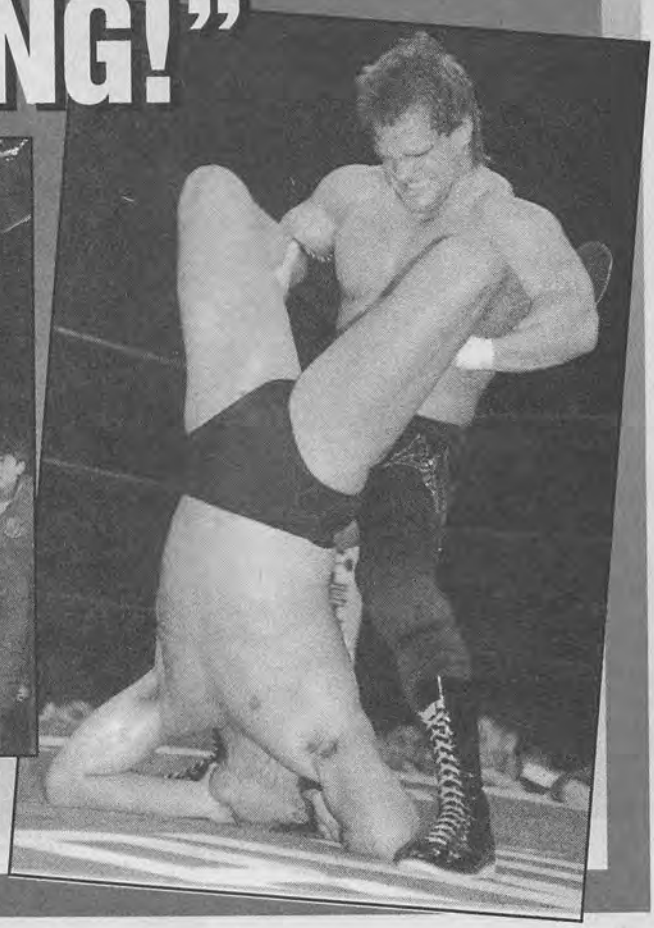
Because now Sabu has found his heart. And that has made him stronger. □



CHRIS BENOIT:

"I'LL BE PATIENT, BUT NOT FOR LONG!"





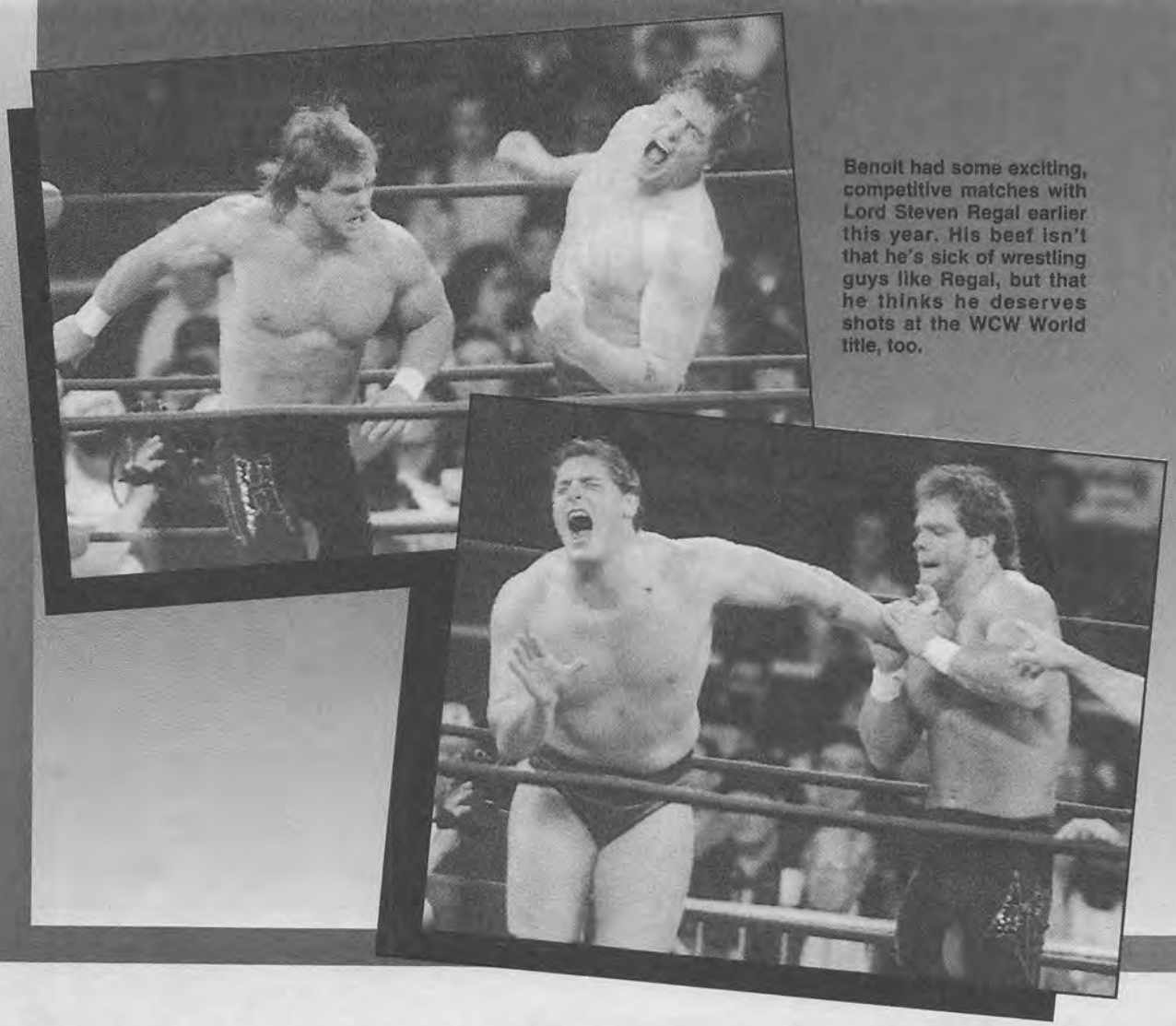
Benoit was terrific in defeat against Shinjiro Otani in a cruiserweight tournament. He is a superior high-flyer (above) as well as a master of several submission holds (right), but he doesn't want to be considered just a great light heavyweight.

Chris Benoit doesn't usually do much talking, so when he does open his mouth, it's because he has something important to say. Right now, he's saying he's not happy, and he's thinking about doing something to improve his mood!

By Dave Rosenbaum

THE PAIRINGS FOR Battlebowl had just been announced and Chris Benoit couldn't have been angrier. WCW officials tried to tell him that his pairing with Kevin Sullivan was for one night only, then reminded Benoit that he was contractually bound to live by the random pairings. Still, there was no consoling Benoit.

"Is this somebody's sick idea of a joke?!" the normally reserved Benoit screamed. "Do you really think I'm going to get into that ring and team with Sullivan? I'll kick the crap out of him—that's what I'll do. The only way he'll pin anybody is if he falls dead on top of him!"



Benoit had some exciting, competitive matches with Lord Steven Regal earlier this year. His beef isn't that he's sick of wrestling guys like Regal, but that he thinks he deserves shots at the WCW World title, too.

Arn Anderson walked over and tried to console Benoit.

"It'll be a good opportunity," Anderson said.

"A good opportunity for what?" Benoit shot back. "To get ambushed by that Dungeon of Doom? To lose a tag team match? What kind of opportunity is this? I feel like somebody's setting me up!"

Benoit stormed out of the room and didn't even notice that he nearly closed the door on Sullivan's hand. Or maybe he just didn't care. But two days later, when a reporter approached Benoit and asked him if he felt better about the Battlebowl pairings, Benoit said, "Why? Should I be? Have they been changed?"

For Benoit, the pairing with Sullivan at Battlebowl was another example of him getting exactly what he didn't want. He wanted to join The Four Horsemen and did, but he didn't want to merely act as a bodyguard for Ric Flair and Arn Anderson. He wanted to wrestle Randy Savage, but when the "Macho Man" was WCW World champion, not after he lost the belt. And he wanted to wrestle on more pay-per-view cards, but not as Kevin Sullivan's tag team partner in an offbeat tournament.

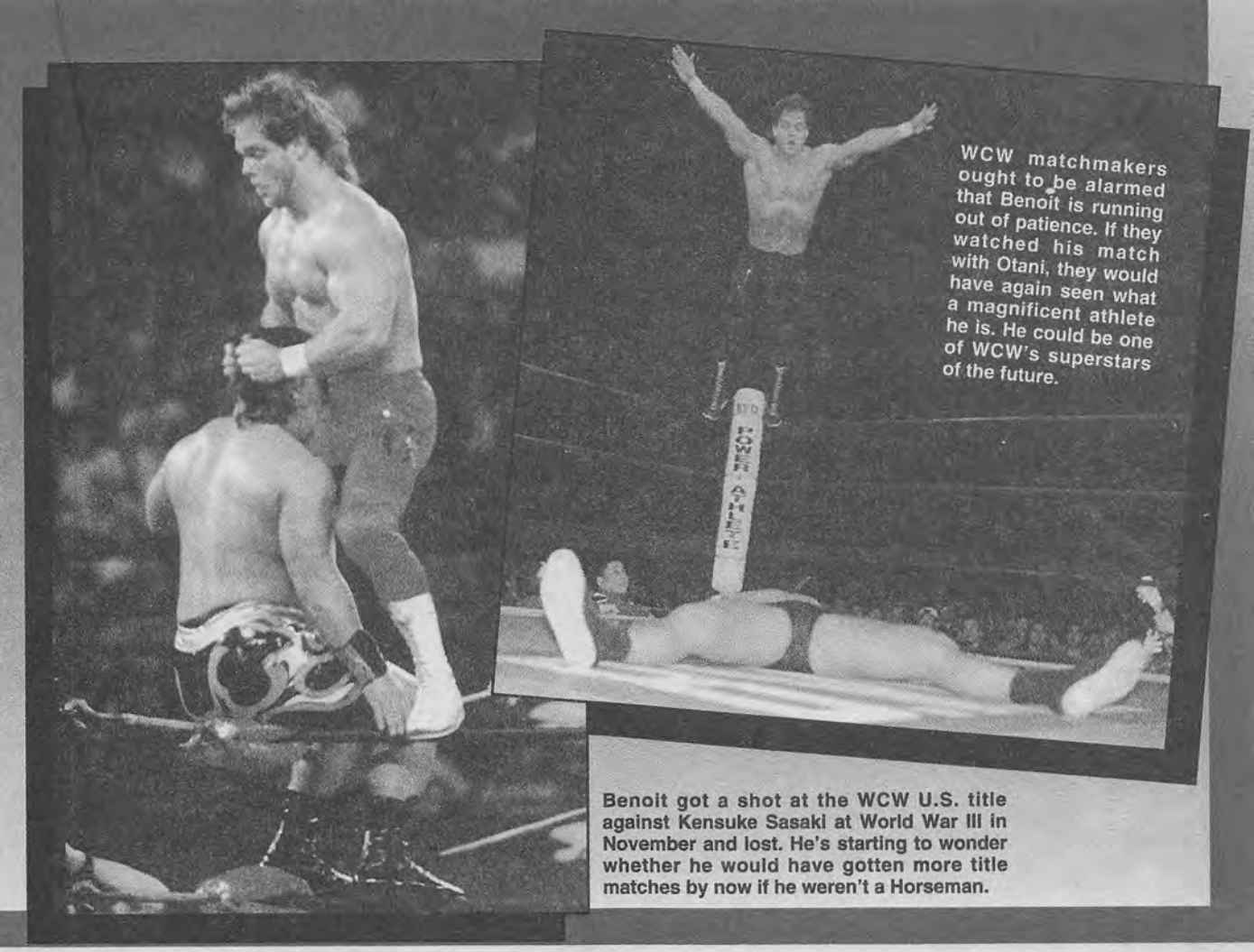
And now his patience is starting to wear.

"It's past the point of ridiculous," Benoit said. "Ric was champion, so I understood why I didn't get a shot at him, but now The Giant's champion, so when's my turn? I don't like that guy. I'd love to wrestle him, because I know I'm better than him. I don't care if he's 20 feet tall—I'll beat him!

"And how about Konnan? Look, somebody gave him a chance and see what happened? Now it's my turn. I'll be patient, but not for long!"

Benoit has already been patient for a long time. The 10-year veteran from Calgary, Alberta, finally had a career breakthrough when he joined the Horsemen late last year, but it didn't result in Benoit getting the kind of matches he wanted. Instead of being spotlighted by the Horsemen, he was expected to protect Anderson and Flair. When Benoit missed a *Monday Nitro* in mid-December, Anderson said, "He shoulda been here. He's supposed to be watching our backs at all times."

Benoit later confirmed his commitment to the Horsemen, but privately confided to a reporter, "I'm supposed to be watching their backs? They're big boys, aren't they?"



WCW matchmakers ought to be alarmed that Benoit is running out of patience. If they watched his match with Otani, they would have again seen what a magnificent athlete he is. He could be one of WCW's superstars of the future.

Benoit got a shot at the WCW U.S. title against Kensuke Sasaki at World War III in November and lost. He's starting to wonder whether he would have gotten more title matches by now if he weren't a Horseman.

Benoit remained a Horseman, despite occasional conflicts, and turned his attention to Kevin Sullivan's Dungeon of Doom. From a rulebreaker vs. fan favorite standpoint, the Dungeon and the Horsemen should have been allies. Instead, Benoit helped to put them at war.

"Sullivan? Why should I have any allegiance to him?" Benoit asked. "The way I see it, we're at opposite poles, and that's the way it's going to stay. But on the other hand, I'm concerned that my problems with Sullivan might be hurting my career. Maybe it's time to go on to bigger and better things."

Which, presumably, wouldn't include more matches against Eddy Guerrero. Although the Guerrero-Benoit matches have been scientific classics, Benoit correctly is concerned that he's being pigeonholed as a light heavyweight who either doesn't want to wrestle the big men or is incapable of doing so effectively. Nothing could be further from the truth, Benoit said.

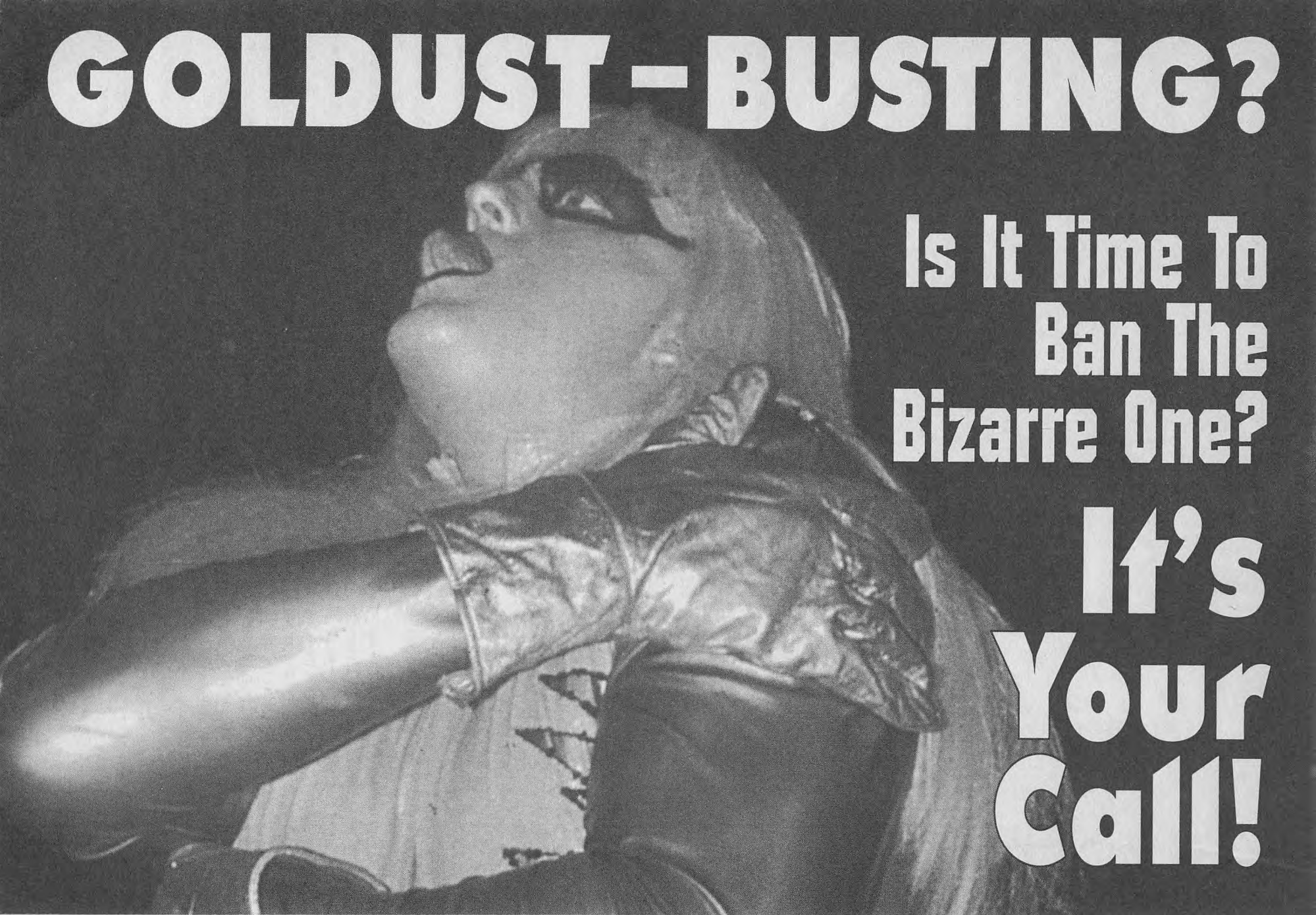
"I weigh about 220 pounds," Benoit said. "That's not exactly light. Savage only weighs 235 to 240. Most of the top guys don't have more than 25 or 30 pounds on me and, believe me, that's not very much when you have the skills that I do. Flair doesn't really use his size. Neither does Arn. How about Sting? He'd probably be a better wrestler if he was 25 pounds lighter. I just don't get it. Maybe I've been pigeonholed, and that's the trap I have to get out of."

It's a trap not easily escaped. Wrestlers weighing less than 220 pounds rarely get shots at world heavyweight titles. There seems to be an unofficial weight minimum in this sport that cuts off just above Benoit. If Benoit thought the Horsemen would help him in his title quest, he was sadly mistaken. The Horsemen's energies are directed toward Flair.

"Maybe some people are saying it was a mistake for me to join the Horsemen, but so far they've been pretty good to me," Benoit said. "I think it's really a matter of me making my own breaks. I'm in WCW now, and I'm planning on being here for a long time. If I left, I think that would be a problem because people would look at me as a failure, which I'm not. But maybe it's good that I'm running out of patience. Maybe I've been too patient for too long."

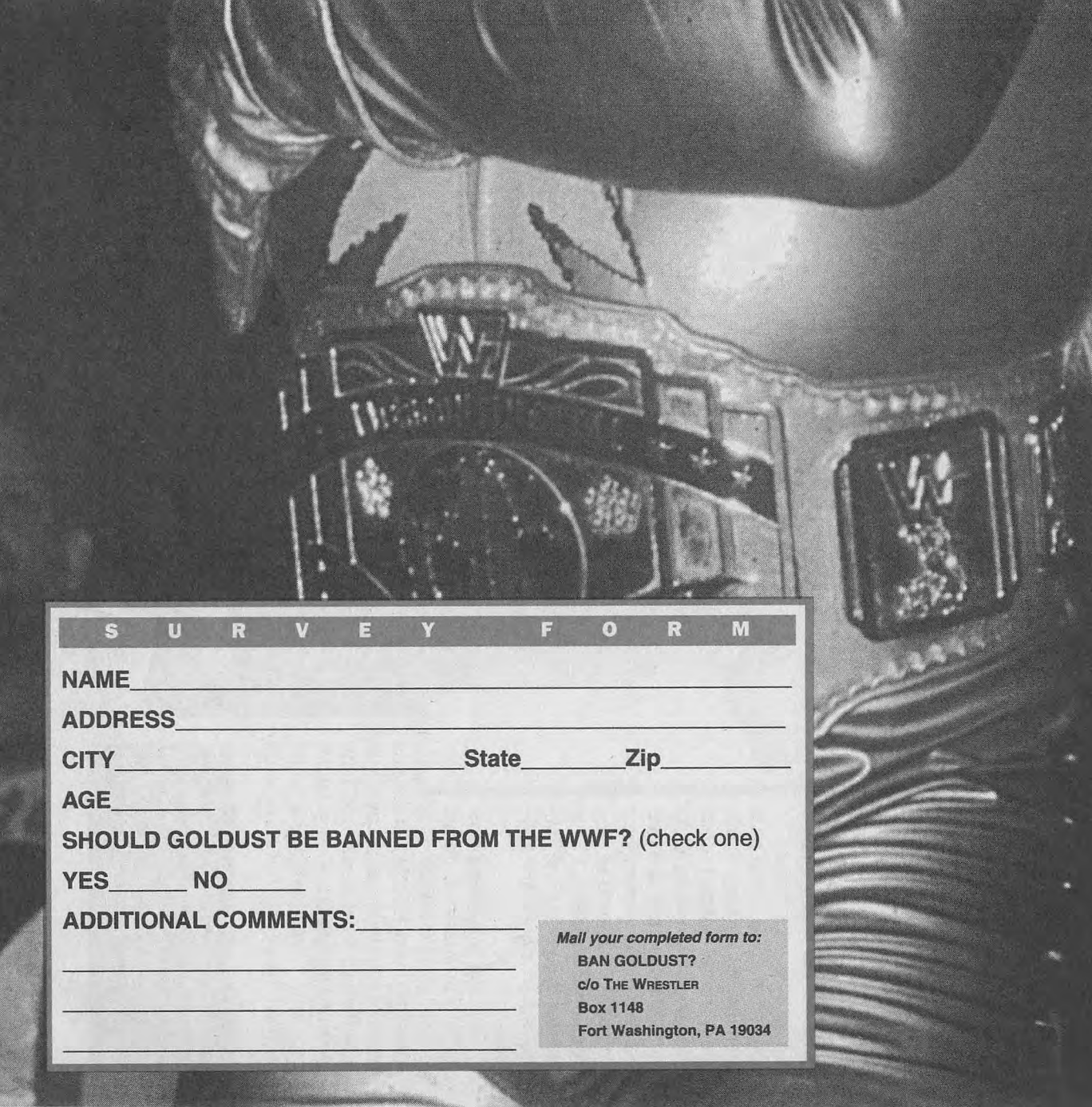
And maybe the big boys ought to start taking notice of Chris Benoit. □

GOLDUST-BUSTING?



Is It Time To Ban The Bizarre One?

It's Your Call!



You make the decision. You've had to put up with Goldust for months ... or maybe you've enjoyed watching him for months. No matter how you feel personally about the WWF Intercontinental champ, you almost have to agree that he is the most controversial star in the history of the WWF.

But what *do* you think of him? You've seen all the "mind games" he has played with Razor Ramon, Roddy Piper, Savio Vega, The Ultimate Warrior, and The Undertaker. You don't need us to tell you about the lewd things he has said and done. But we do need you to tell us if you think enough is enough already.

We have a very serious question to ask you: Do you think Goldust should be banned from the WWF? Has he gone too far? We made our views about Goldust very clear in the cover story of the May 1996 issue of *Pro Wrestling Illustrated.* Now we need to know what you think. Just complete the mini-survey we have presented to you here and mail it to: Ban Goldust?, c/o THE WRESTLER, Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034. We'll send the results of this survey to Vince McMahon and Gorilla Monsoon at the WWF and then print them in a future issue.

S U R V E Y F O R M

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY_____ **State**_____ **Zip**_____

AGE_____

SHOULD GOLDUST BE BANNED FROM THE WWF? (check one)

YES_____ **NO**_____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:_____

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Mail your completed form to:

BAN GOLDUST?
c/o THE WRESTLER
Box 1148
Fort Washington, PA 19034

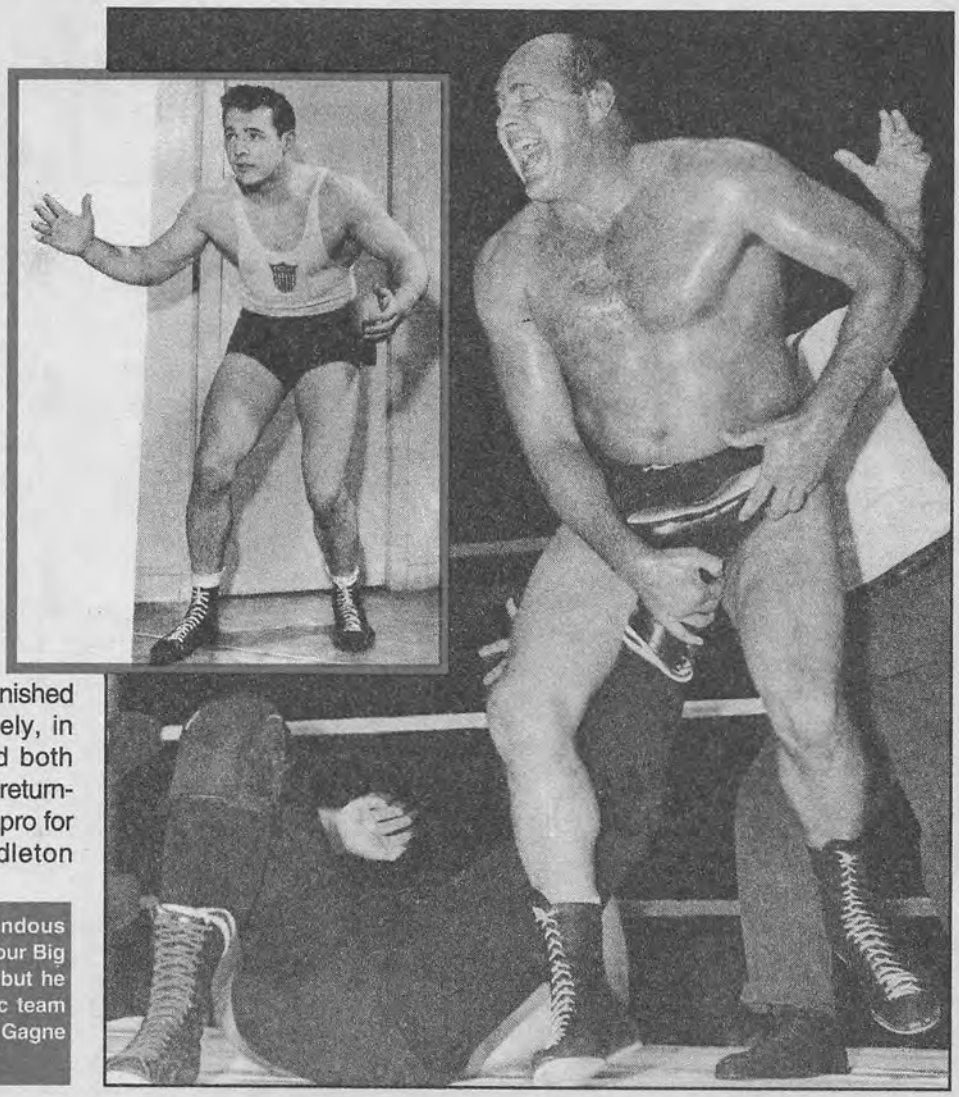
From Five Rings To

U.S. OLYMPIC WRESTLERS WHO TURNED PRO

By Mike Chapman

THIS YEAR MARKS the 100th anniversary of the modern Olympics, as the grand athletic spectacle was reborn in Athens in 1896. In the past century, 53 amateur wrestlers have earned gold medals in Olympic competition. But have any of those 53 gold medal winners ventured into the world of professional wrestling? The answer is yes—but only few have had significant success.

The first U.S. Olympians to turn professional came out of the 1920 Games. Nat Pendleton and Fred Meyer finished second and third, respectively, in the heavyweight class, and both wrestled professionally upon returning home. Meyer remained a pro for almost 10 years, but Pendleton



Verne Gagne was once a tremendous amateur wrestler (inset). He won four Big Ten Conference titles in college, but he only made the 1948 U.S. Olympic team as an alternate. As a pro (right), Gagne won nine AWA World titles.

The Squared Circle

The 1996 Summer Games are almost upon us. Will any of this year's U.S. Olympic wrestlers make an impact on the pro game? We don't know, but here's a look at some past American Olympians who did

Dan Hodge had more Olympic success than Gagne. The University of Oklahoma standout won a silver medal amidst controversy in 1956, then went on to win seven NWA World junior heavyweight titles in his pro career (inset).

gave up the mat sport within a year and moved to Hollywood, where he became an actor. He appeared in more than 60 movies during the 1930s and '40s.

In 1924, Robin Reed of Oregon won the gold medal in the 134-pound class at the Paris Olympics. Reed never lost an amateur match. Rumor has it that on the ship en route to Paris, he worked out with every member of the U.S. team and pinned all of them, including heavyweight Harry Steel, who was good enough to win a gold medal in his weight class.

It was well-known among wrestlers that if a foe didn't surrender to Reed's double-wristlock and go to his back, Reed wouldn't hesitate to snap the elbow. Reed wrestled professionally as a welterweight for several years and undoubtedly would have been well-suited to any competition similar to the Ultimate Fighting Championships had such competitions existed back then.

Ed Don George placed fourth in the heavyweight class at the 1928 Olympics in Amsterdam, and on December 10, 1930, he defeated Gus Sonnenberg to win the NWA World heavyweight title. Though he held that title for only four months before losing it to Ed "Strangler" Lewis, he entered the history books as the first Olympian ever to win a major pro title. And he did hold the NWA belt again—for just 11 days—in 1933.

Three wrestlers—Robert Pearce

at 123 pounds, Jack Van Bebber at 158.5, and Pete Mehringer at 191.5—earned gold medals in the 1932 Olympics, which were held in Los Angeles. All three tried their hand at pro wrestling, but none lasted long.

Canada native Earl McCready won three NCAA titles for Oklahoma State University and made the 1932 Canadian Olympic team, but he failed to earn a medal in Los Angeles. That didn't deter him from going pro, though. He was a big star in the Northeast and Canada for two decades.

Roy Dunn was a national AAU champion who made the 1936 Olympic team, but, like McCready, he failed to win a medal in the Games. Dunn wrestled pro for several years and was moderately successful.

One of the greatest American amateur wrestlers of all-time was Henry Wittenberg, a tough New York City cop who reportedly won more than 300 consecutive matches in the late-1940s. Wittenberg was considered a cinch to make the 1948 Olympic squad at 191 pounds, but he ran into a very talented collegiate star by the name of Verne Gagne before he got there.

Wrestling for the University of Minnesota, Gagne became the first man ever to win four Big Ten Conference titles. He also captured two NCAA titles (one at 191 pounds, the other at heavyweight), and fought his way to the finals of the 1948 Olympic Trials, where he met Wittenberg.

The Wittenberg-Gagne showdown was a highlight of the entire amateur season. Neither man would give an inch, but Wittenberg was finally given the nod on a controversial call, and he had no trouble winning the gold medal in London. Gagne was invited along as an alternate and had to sit in the stands while his arch-rival earned the gold.

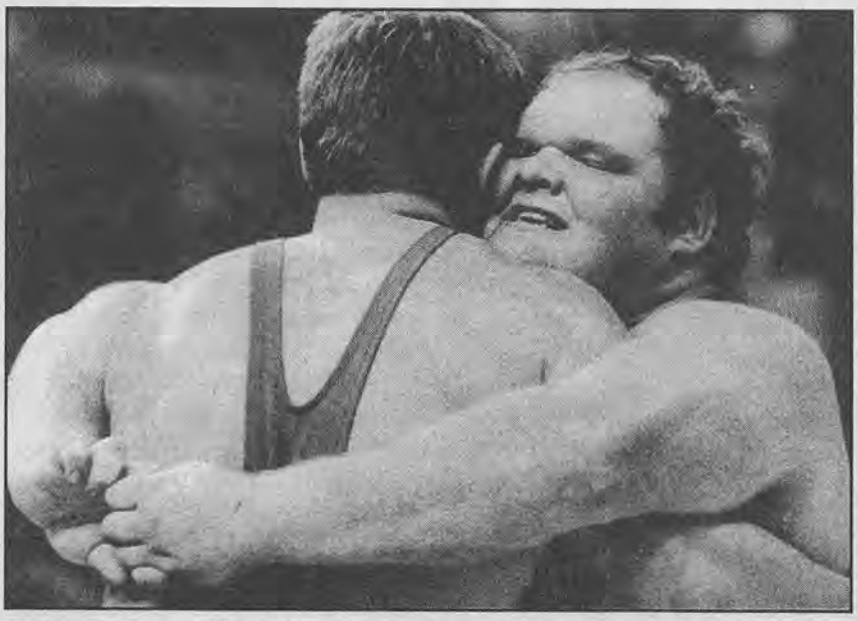
Upon arriving back in the States, Wittenberg was called America's finest amateur wrestler in years. There was talk of making a match between him and legendary NWA World heavyweight champion Lou Thesz, but it never materialized.

Meanwhile, Gagne put his amateur career behind him and went on to become one of the greatest professional stars of the last half-century, and he did clash with Thesz. They engaged in several classic NWA World title matches before packed houses. Gagne ended up winning his first AWA World title in 1960 (he would go on to win a total of nine). He is still accorded a hero's welcome whenever he shows up at amateur wrestling events.

A teammate of Wittenberg's and Gagne's on the 1948 Olympic team was Dick Hutton, a brawny heavyweight from Oklahoma State. Hutton won NCAA titles in 1947, 1948, and 1950, with his only collegiate loss coming to Gagne in the 1949 NCAA finals.

Hutton was one of the favorites to win a gold medal in London, but he injured his shoulder in the second round and had to withdraw from competition. He went on to become a professional wrestler for several years and won the NWA World title from Thesz in November of 1957. He held that championship for nearly 14 months before surrendering it to Pat O'Connor.

The American who put together

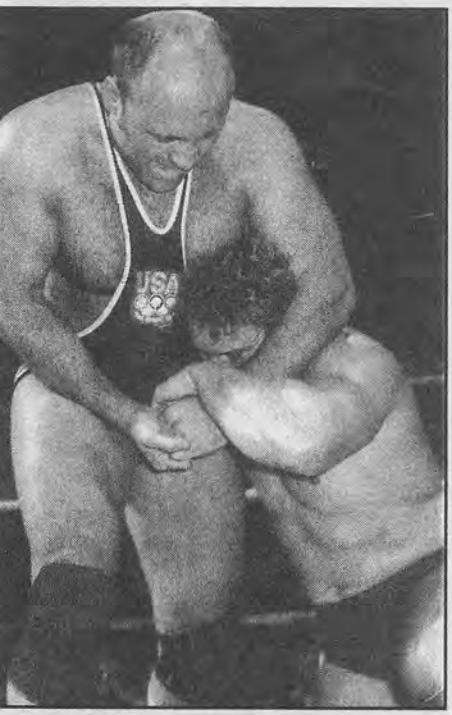


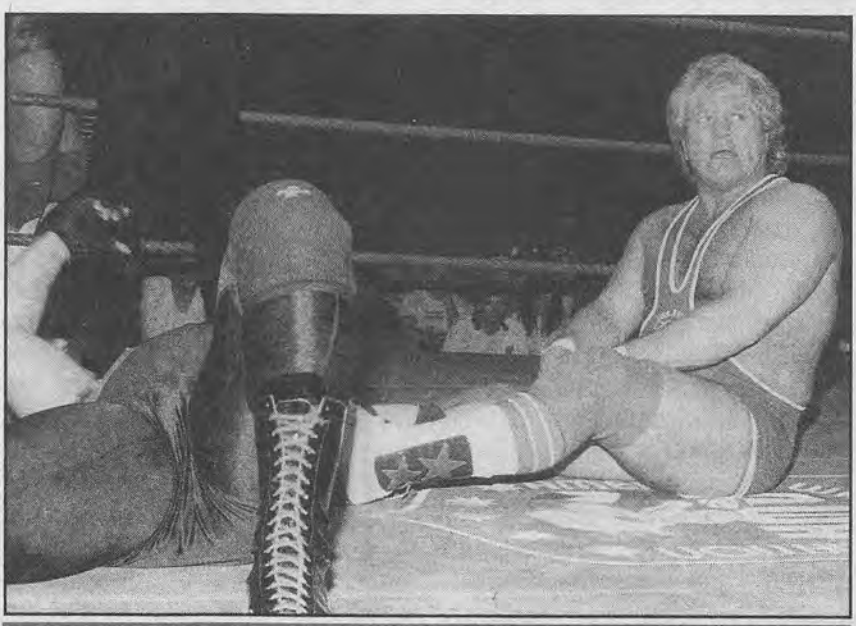
What Olympic wrestling fan could forget 445-pound Chris Taylor's bronze medal-winning performance at the '72 Games (above)? Taylor later tried his hand at the pro game (right), but he was never an overwhelming success.

the best pro/amateur career would have to be Dan Hodge, who was one of the greatest amateur stars of all-time. Wrestling for the University of Oklahoma, he won three NCAA titles at 177 pounds and never lost a match during his entire collegiate career!

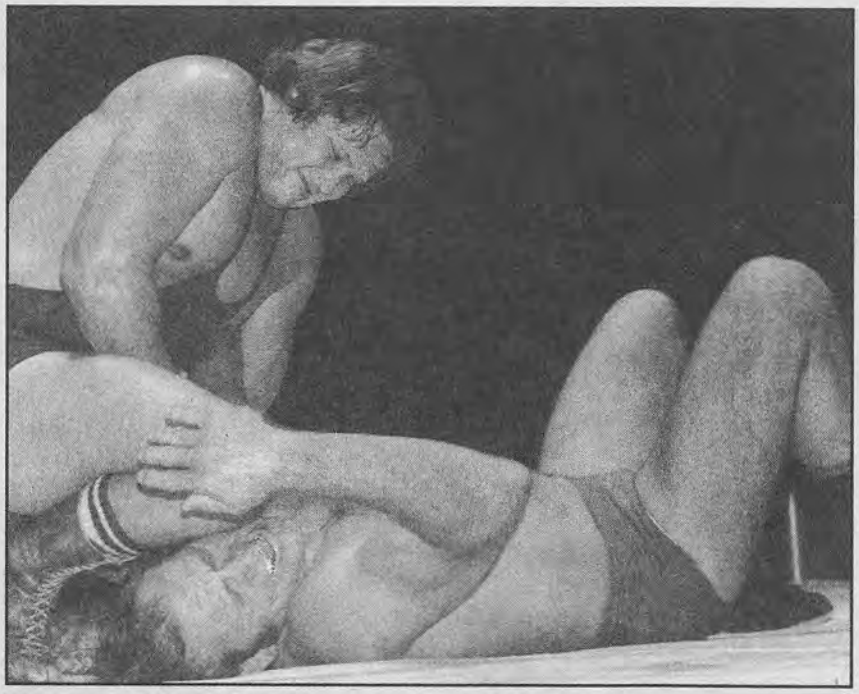
Hodge is the only amateur wrestler to ever appear on the cover of *Sports Illustrated* (cover date April 1, 1957) and was a solid favorite to win the gold medal at 174 pounds in 1956 in Melbourne, Australia. He had won four matches in a row and was leading the defending world champion, a Bulgarian, 8-1, with 50 seconds left in the match, when the two men fell to the mat.

Hodge rolled through on his shoulders and stood up. He thought he had won. But the Soviet mat judge called a rolling fall on him, and the Bulgarian was given the victory. Incensed, Hodge pinned a Russian in his next match and wound up with a silver medal.





Both Brad Rheingans (above) and Greg Wojokowski (left) made the 1980 Olympic team, but because the U.S. boycotted the event, they were never able to compete. Both men had respectable pro careers, too.



There have been a few occasions when former Olympians have clashed inside pro rings. Bob Roop was a member of Gary Hart's stable of rulebreakers when he punished his fellow former Olympian Dan Hodge during a 1974 match.

Turning to boxing, Hodge won a national Golden Gloves title in 1959. He tried professional boxing for a year, then returned to his first love and became a professional wrestler. Wrestling mostly in the Southeast, Hodge, who weighed only about 215 pounds at his peak, went on to become a seven-time NWA World junior heavyweight champion. To this day, he is considered one of the greatest wrestlers who ever lived.

The next Olympian to try professional wrestling was Bob Roop. He made the Greco-Roman Olympic team at 213 pounds and competed in Mexico City in 1968, but he failed to place.

Dan Gable, who once won 181

consecutive matches over a seven-year period, breezed to the gold medal in the 1972 Olympics in Munich without surrendering a single point in his six matches. Gable certainly would have been a huge attraction for the pro game were he so inclined ... and had he been heavier than 149 pounds. But one of Gable's teammates on the 1972 Olympic team was certainly large enough. Chris Taylor won two NCAA titles for Iowa State University and was the biggest star, literally, in Munich that year. At 6'5", 445 pounds, Taylor was sought out by fans, athletes, and members of the media everywhere he went at the '72 Games.

Taylor lost one match in Munich, bowing 3-2 to legendary Soviet heavyweight Alexandre Medved, and finished third. Medved, who stood 6'6" and weighed 265 pounds, captured 10 world amateur titles before retiring in 1973.

Taylor ultimately signed with the AWA and wrestled professionally for several years, but he never became a star. He ran into a series of health problems and died in 1979 at age 29.

Dan Severn has become famous for his accomplishments as NWA champion and as a two-time UFC champion, but he had an amateur career somewhat similar to Gagne's. Severn was an alternate at the 1984 Olympics.

One Olympian whom fans of pro wrestling might be more familiar with is Brad Rheingans. He had a great college career at North Dakota State (he arrived there in 1972, just as Bob Backlund was leaving). After his college career was over, Rheingans placed third in the worlds in Greco-Roman wrestling in 1979 and made the 1980 Olympic team at 220 pounds. He was favored to win a medal, but he never got the chance because President Jimmy Carter forced the U.S. team to boycott the Moscow Games. Rheingans captured the AWA World tag team title in 1989 with Ken Patera, who had won a bronze medal in weightlifting at the 1972 Olympics. Rheingans has also gained a reputation as one of the sport's best trainers.

Greg Wojokowski made the freestyle team in 1980 at heavyweight, but he stayed at home with the other U.S. Olympians. He wrestled part-time as a pro for many years under the name The Great Wojo.

The greatest amateur heavyweight ever to come out of America, though, would have to be Bruce Baumgartner, who has won 16 national freestyle titles and two Olympic gold medals. The 6'3", 280-pounder has placed in the top three at world meets on 10 different occasions and is a favorite to make the American team this year. Through the years, he has hinted he might consider a brief pro career.

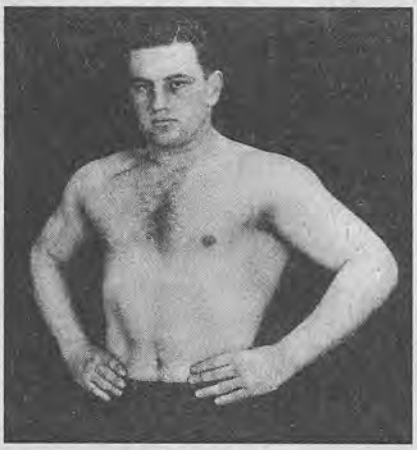
Like Gagne, Dan Severn was an alternate for the Olympics. Severn was a high school sensation in Michigan and a two-time all-America in college at Arizona State. He battled his way to the finals of the 1984 Olympic Trials at 220 pounds before losing a series of tough matches to Lou Banach, a two-time NCAA heavyweight champion from the University of Iowa.

Banach breezed to the gold medal in Los Angeles in '84, giving

YEAR-BY-YEAR: U.S. OLYMPIANS WENT PRO

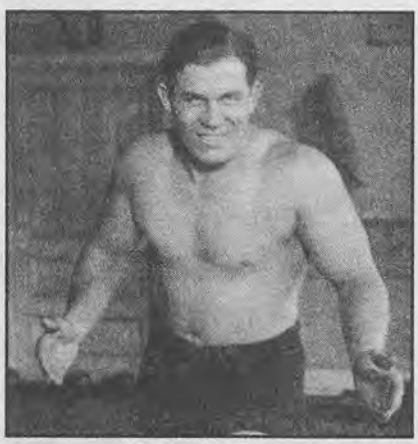
1920: Nat Pendleton (silver medal); Fred Meyer (bronze medal)
1924: Robin Reed (gold medal)
1928: Ed Don George (fourth place)
1932: Jack Van Bebber (gold medal), Robert Pearce (gold medal), Pete Mehringer (gold medal)
1936: Roy Dunn (did not place)
1940: Olympics canceled due to World War II
1944: Olympics canceled due to World War II
1948: Dick Hutton (did not place); Verne Gagne (alternate)
1952: none
1956: Dan Hodge (silver medal)
1960: none
1964: none
1968: Bob Roop (did not place)
1972: Chris Taylor (bronze medal)
1976: none
1980: Brad Rheingans and Greg Wojokowski make team, but the U.S. boycotts the Olympics in Moscow
1984: none
1988: Duane Koslowski (bronze medal)
1992: Duane Koslowski (silver medal)

up just one point in five matches. Severn was in the same position as Gagne was in 1948—forced to watch from the sidelines knowing full well he could have been a gold medalist if given the chance to compete. After his amateur career ended, Severn turned to the pro game. He competed in Japan before winning the NWA title; he has also won two Ultimate Fighting Championship titles.



Ed Don George

Dick Hutton



Nat Pendleton

Although Jim Raschke never made an Olympic team, he finished third in the World championships in Greco-Roman in 1963. Several years later, he debuted as the hated Baron Von Raschke, and was a pro star for more than two decades.

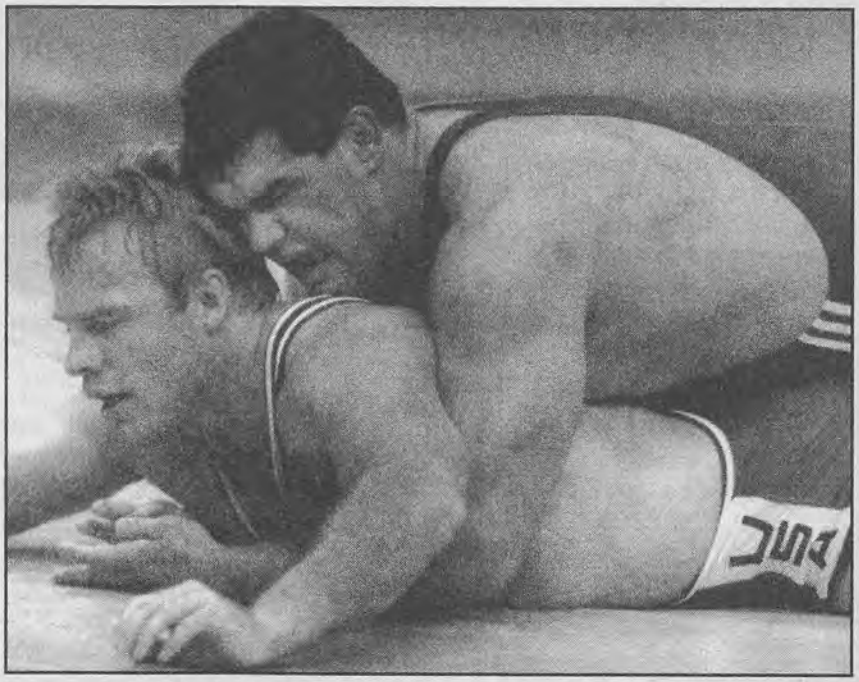
Duane Koslowski earned a bronze medal in the 1988 Olympics at 220 pounds and a silver in 1992, both in Greco-Roman wrestling. He wrestled professionally in Japan for several years.

Earl McCready

Promoters will undoubtedly be drooling when they see Alexandre Karelin of Russia stride onto the mat in Atlanta this summer. The 6'3", 285-pounder is built like Arnold Schwarzenegger and has never lost an international match. What he has done is win eight straight Greco-Roman world titles (including the Olympics in 1988 and 1992). He is riding a streak of 232 consecutive wins, which dates back nearly 10 years.

"He's like a rock star in Europe," said an official at USA Wrestling, the sport's national governing body. "Fans flock around him wherever he goes. Physically, he's the most impressive athlete in the world." □

(Mike Chapman has been named National Wrestling Writer of the Year four times and has written more than 450 columns and articles on amateur wrestling. He has also written 10 books, including* Gotch: World's Greatest Wrestler. *He is now the publisher of W.I.N., a national amateur wrestling publication.)



Duane Koslowski sprawls on the mat to break the grasp of Hungry's Laszlo Krauz at 1988 Olympics in Seoul. Koslowski went on to win the bronze medal in Greco-Roman and followed up four years later with a silver at the Barcelona Games.

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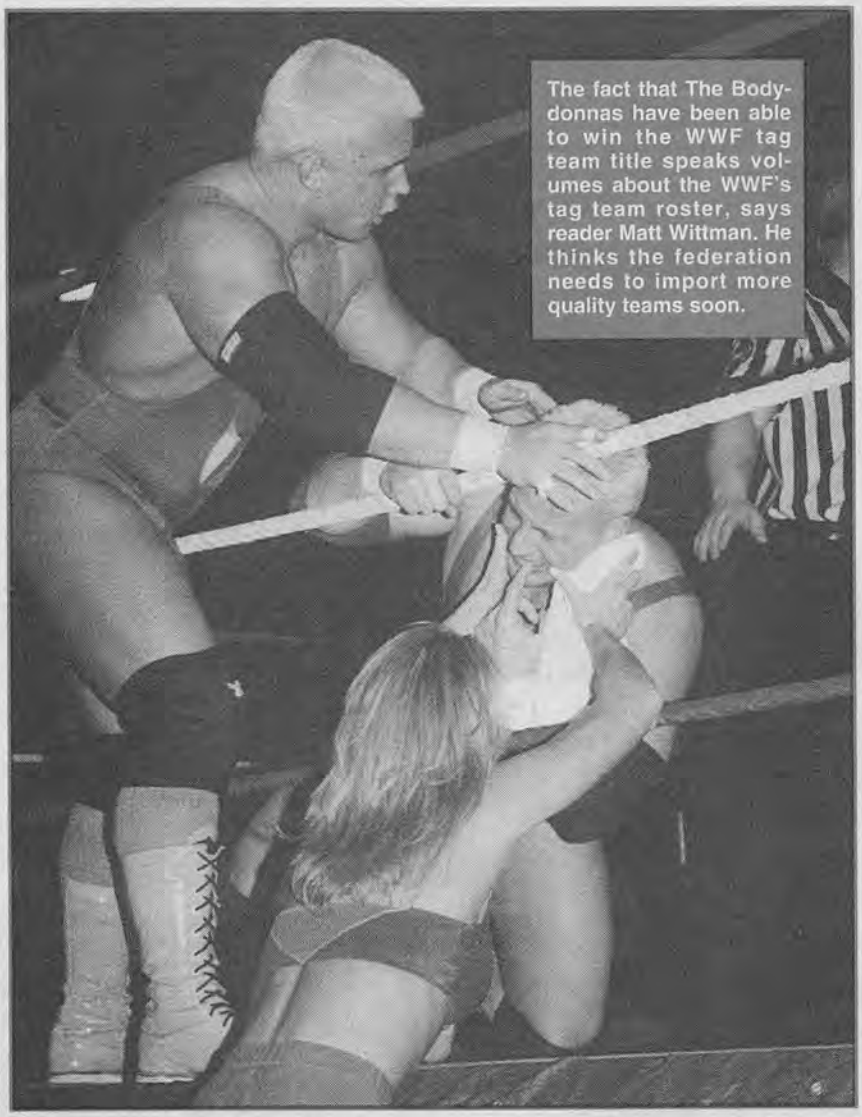
YOUR LETTERS

(Continued from page 5)



The fact that The Bodydonnas have been able to win the WWF tag team title speaks volumes about the WWF's tag team roster, says reader Matt Wittman. He thinks the federation needs to import more quality teams soon.

Ric Flair. Now at least she has a better life with the "Nature Boy." When Elizabeth was his manager, Savage often treated her like dirt. He seemed to always insult her and put her down.

Elizabeth is finally getting her revenge and is now having the time of her life. Like Flair said: "It must kill you to see your ex-wife with the 'Nature Boy.'" Personally, I think that Savage is getting what he deserves.

MATT WILSON
Framingham, MA

TAG TEAM TROUBLES

It's almost a shame to see the WWF tag team picture looking so bleak. Tag team champions Skip and Zip simply don't generate any excitement in their title defenses. Of course, watching the immortal Bushwhackers (who have had since 1988 or so to win the WWF tag title) does not evoke memories of the great teams the WWF used to have, either. Vince McMahon should stop worrying so much about Ted Turner and look at his weak tag team division instead.

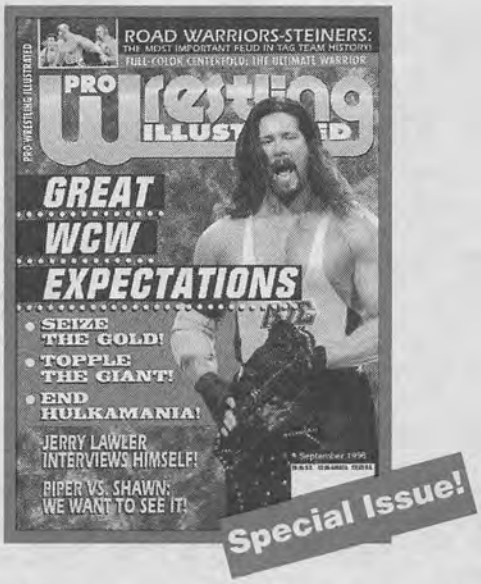
The only remedy is to have someone at the WWF scout independents and foreign federations and sign some better talent before it's too late.

MATT WITTMAN
Waterloo, IL

(Continued on page 68)

THIS Month In...

Pro Wrestling Illustrated



DIESEL'S first stint in WCW was hardly memorable, but his second could be spectacular. We think he must do *three* things if he wants to be an overwhelming success there: End **HULKAMANIA**, topple **THE GIANT**, and seize the World title! … Did we see the last of **RODDY PIPER** at WrestleMania XII? Maybe so, but don't you think he has one more thing to accomplish? How about beating **SHAWN MICHAELS**?! … **JERRY LAWLER** has been interviewed dozens and dozens of times, and he says he's tired of the same old questions. So we let him interview *himself!*

All this—and much more!—in the September 1996 issue of ***Pro Wrestling Illustrated***

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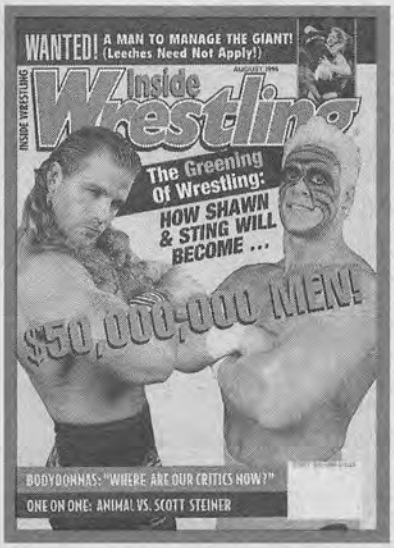

STING and **SHAWN MICHAELS** are just now hitting their wrestling primes. They're so popular, charismatic, and exciting to watch. The next decade for both should be very financially rewarding. We'll show you exactly how we think they could become wrestling's first $50-million men! … Does anyone know what's going on with **THE GIANT**? He looks confused. Can he truly trust **JIMMY HART**? It's high time he found himself a *manager*, not someone who will manipulate him! … Learn why we think it's imperative that **GOLDUST** throw **MARLENA** off his set now!

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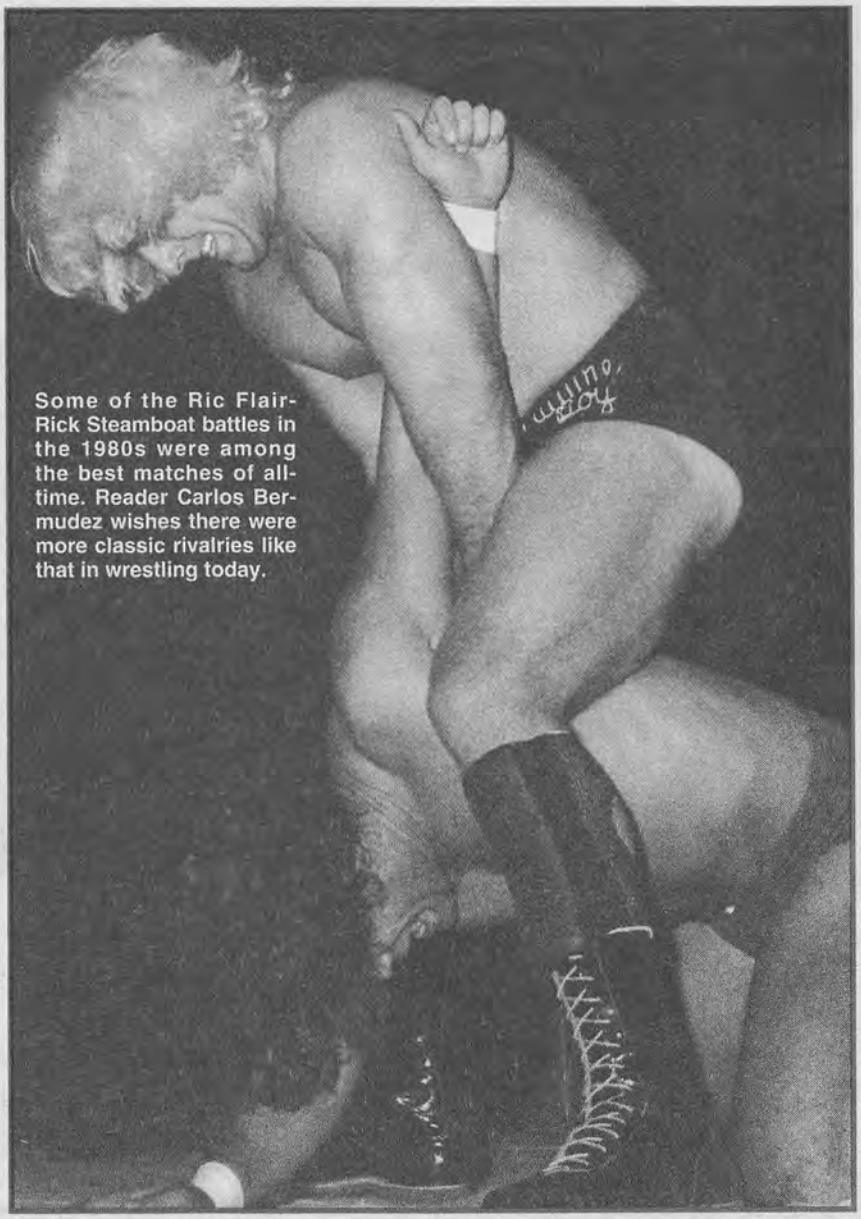
YOUR LETTERS

(Continued from page 66)



Some of the Ric Flair-Rick Steamboat battles in the 1980s were among the best matches of all-time. Reader Carlos Bermudez wishes there were more classic rivalries like that in wrestling today.

GOOD OL' DAYS

Where have the days of the great grudge matches gone? I miss the epic Ric Flair-Rick Steamboat battles. In my opinion, that was pro wrestling at its best.

For 12 years now, wrestling has been a showcase for stars that in many instances concentrate less on pure competition and too much on charisma and outlandish, exaggerated tactics (both legal and illegal). The men of this great sport must remember that before they try to attract teeny-boppers, little kids, and casual fans, they must first impress the hardcore fans of the sport. They must realize that wrestling is about scientific maneuvers, power, aerial moves, and 60-minute bouts that go to the time limit; it's not just about putting on a flashy show to sell tickets.

CARLOS BERMUDEZ
Hialeah, FL □

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JULY 1994 *INSIDE WRESTLING* includes 21 pages of one-of-a-kind prognostications as *Inside Wrestling* looks into the sport's future and reports back to you! Coverage in this 88-page issue includes a four-page pinup section!

OCTOBER 1994 *INSIDE WRESTLING* presents the bold and brassy "WCW Midyear Report," a 15-page overview of the first half of 1994. Four full-color pinups fill out this 88-page special edition.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING

(Continued from page 7)

You can forget about seeing Brian Pillman in the ring for a while. He suffered serious injuries in a car accident in April and even had to have his jaw wired shut for a while. The WWF figures to be his next stop.

to beat Steel City Wrestling junior heavyweight champion **Lord Zoltan** in a non-title match, Zoltan has agreed to grant him a title match. "He's got a false sense of security," Zoltan said. "When the belt is on the line, I am a different man. I am unbeatable. Non-title matches are just a workout to me."

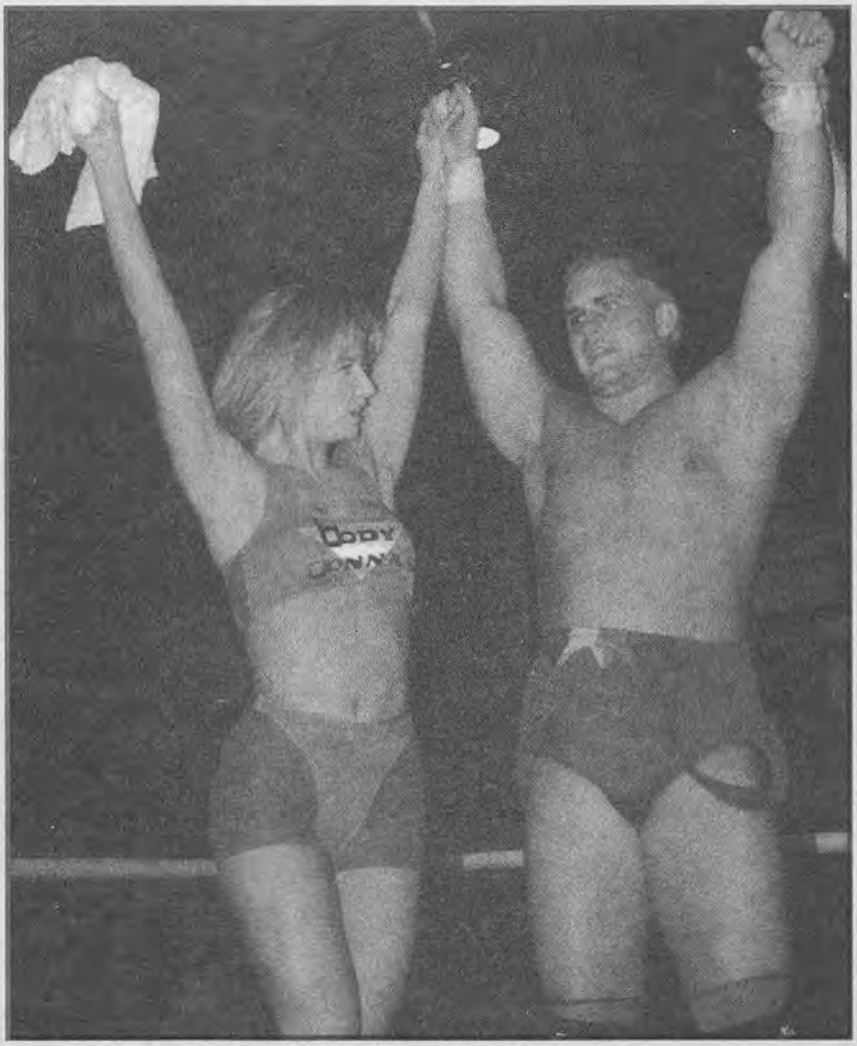
Former WWF World champion **The Iron Sheik** has signed for a series of matches with Steel City Wrestling ... **Akira Taue** won All-Japan's annual "Carnival" tournament by beating **Steve Williams** in the finals ... **D-Von Dudley** said he plans "to toughen up the entire Dudley clan. My brothers are a bunch of pansies, and I will not let that go on any longer!" ... **Major DeBeers** and **Count Grog** continue to run roughshod in the Great American Wrestling Federation. They recently knocked out TV champion **J.D. Sullivan** by using ether on him. If it were up to me, I'd see to it that both were suspended for a long time.

Brian Pillman is still in the process of recovering from the injuries he sustained in an automobile accident in April that almost ended his life. When he does return to the ring, it doesn't look like it will be in ECW or WCW. I spoke with a source very close to him, and I was told that he is currently negotiating with the WWF. "Brian feels that Shawn Michaels would be easy pickings for him," the source told me. "He feels that the style he uses is the style you have to use to beat someone like Michaels." Pillman, who had his jaw wired shut when I called for a comment, promised to return my call. I'll be waiting, Brian!

Sunny said she is toying with the idea of eventually letting her **Bodydonnas** wrestle singles matches more often. "Just picture this: Skip with the World heavyweight championship, Zip with the Intercontinental belt, and both of them still with the tag team belts," Sunny sighed. "It's completely possible. We know that both Skip or Zip can beat Shawn. As for Goldust, well, I think either one of my boys could get the three-count on him and win that belt. Then the topper is when I replace **Vince McMahon** in that plush office at Titan Towers and run the entire federation. I can see it all now!"

I'm not sure I can.

That's what's happening. I'll see you at the matches! □



Sunny is so proud of what Skip (above) and Zip have accomplished as a tag team in the WWF that she's thinking about urging them to go after some singles belts, too.

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(Continued from page 8)

TOP 10 SIGNS YOU'RE WATCHING A BAD WRESTLING MATCH

10. Before the match, the announcers warn you that the bout you are about to see "may cause searing abdominal cramps."
9. Eric Bischoff refuses to give away the results during a live *Nitro*.
8. During the match, Vince McMahon has a live phone conversation with the Mulkey brothers.
7. During the match, cameras cut away to Hulk Hogan arriving in a yellow and red mini-car.
6. The blimp circling the arena is dropping cans of Jolt cola and No-Doz.
5. The referee stops the match because he's "getting too darn sweaty."
4. The announcers and audience are distracted by some guy doing weird things with his souvenir foam finger.
3. Dr. Kevorkian is standing by to interfere.
2. It's advertised as the main event for WCW Uncensored.
1. Three words: coffee, shoes, handcuffs.

Kevin Sullivan used to manage The Giant, but now his buddy Jimmy Hart holds that honor. Sullivan brought Loch Ness to WCW to be managed by Hart. Ness, however, soon became disenchanted with Hart and began feuding with The Giant. Sullivan feuded with Brian Pillman, who left WCW only to return as Sullivan's ally. That alliance was short-lived, because Pillman abandoned Sullivan before the Uncensored show.

Brutus "The Booty Man" Beefcake (or whatever he's calling himself this week) came to WCW as a friend of Hogan. Within months, though, he turned against Hogan and allied himself with Sullivan as "The Butcher." After a break with Sullivan, he became The Man With No Name. He attempted a reconciliation with Hogan, but he was spurned by his former friend. He then ran back to Sullivan and transformed himself into Zodiac, complete with face paint and bizarre hair. Lo and behold, it was all a ruse, and he returned to Hogan's good graces as Booty Man.

The tag team scene isn't much clearer. WCW added some quality teams this year, including The Road Warriors, Steiners, and Public Enemy, to a roster that already featured The Nasty Boys and Harlem Heat. The Road Warriors feuded with Sting and Luger over the tag title. They apparently respect Sting but hate Luger. Many of these teams have both wrestled together *and* joined forces in eight-man tag team matches within the span of a few weeks.

Enemies Sting and Stevie Ray (of Harlem Heat) agreed to team against The Road Warriors at Uncensored. Booker T actually helped his Harlem Heat partner and Sting defeat Sting's brothers-in-paint. Remember, though, that it was Luger and Sting who beat Harlem Heat to win the tag title, and they only did so after Luger hit Booker T with a roll of coins given to him by Jimmy Hart. But because Stevie Ray helped Sting at Uncensored, Sting promised Harlem Heat a shot at the title. One week later, the two teams were feuding again.

We (or should I say me) at "No Holds Barred" certainly hope that this has cleared up some confusion and will make your WCW viewing more understandable and enjoyable. But amidst all the confusion, I can't help but ask ...

What's the point of Battlebowl? □

Lex Luger and Sting are friends, right? Yes, but they do have their disagreements, many of which have been about Jimmy Hart, a man who once managed Luger but isn't thrilled with Sting.

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Stan Hansen won the AWA World title by defeating which champion?
1) Rick Martel
2) Nick Bockwinkel
3) Curt Hennig
4) Verne Gagne

The largest crowd ever to witness a pro wrestling show (190,000) was in what city?
1) London, England
2) Toronto, Ontario
3) Pyongyang, North Korea
4) Tokyo, Japan

True or False: Hulk Hogan is the only wrestler to appear on the cover of Sports Illustrated
1) True
2) False

Which of the following cities did NOT host a portion of WrestleMania II?
1) Chicago, Illinois
2) Atlantic City, New Jersey
3) Uniondale, New York
4) Los Angeles, California

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4220/03-96

CORRESPONDENTS REPORTS

(Continued from page 14)

before finally settling into the match itself, which was very fast-paced.

Ramon dominated the first few minutes of the bout by keeping Goldust down with a series of punishing clotheslines and body-slams. But Goldust fought back with a lot of determination. Once he had Ramon down, he repeatedly kicked him in the back and stomach.

Somewhere along the line, he suffered a leg injury that was later diagnosed as a hyperextended knee, a partially torn hamstring, and a partially torn calf muscle. Still he managed to keep wrestling well, and he pinned the "Bad Guy" in the end.

In other bouts: The Bushwhackers beat Leif Cassidy & The Kid ... Justin Bradshaw beat Duke Droese ... Jake Roberts defeated Isaac Yankem ... Ahmed Johnson beat Owen Hart by disqualification ... Steve Austin defeated Savio Vega ... WWF World tag team champions Skip & Zip beat Henry & Phineas Godwinn ... Bret Hart defeated Davey Boy Smith ... The Undertaker beat Diesel ... WWF World champion Shawn Michaels pinned Hunter Hearst Helmsley.

Jerry Lawler did not make a smart decision when he engaged in a test of strength with Jeff Jarrett in one recent USWA match, but he outsmarted Jarrett after "Double-J" hit him with a foreign object.

Tunica, MS *(Correspondent—Phil Kramer):* The tension between former best friends Jeff Jarrett and Jerry Lawler started escalating even before Jarrett beat Lawler for the USWA heavyweight belt. Everyone who saw their match at the Sheraton Casino could see that.

Jarrett took the first cheap shot several minutes into the match when he hit Lawler with a forearm smash and back-bodydropped him after backing him into the ropes. "The King" came right back, though, and back-bodydropped "Double-J." After Jarrett stalled for a while outside the ring, the two men began trading punches. Jarrett weakened his old friend with a sharp kick to the stomach, but Lawler came right back as Jarrett was gloating and punched him in the face. At that point, Jarrett again retreated to ringside.

A slugfest ensued when he finally returned. Shortly thereafter, Jarrett pulled a foreign object out of his trunks, but he put it back before using it. Later, when the two men locked up in a test of strength, Jarrett kayoed Lawler with the object, but he only got a two-count afterward because "The King" put his foot on the ropes.

After protesting to referee Downtown Bruno that the count was too slow, Jarrett proceeded to pound Lawler with his fists. He later covered him again, but he did so with his knees on Lawler's shoulders. Lawler reached up with his legs, pushed Jarrett backward, and got a three-count himself.

In other bouts: Samantha beat Miss Texas ... Jesse James Armstrong pinned Reggie B. Fine ... USWA tag team champs The Cyberpunks beat Doug Gilbert & Tommy Rich by disqualification ... Cyberpunk Fire beat Bill Dundee ... Brian Christopher & Moondog Spot beat Men on a Mission. □

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YOU ASKED US

(Continued from page 16)

A: "The WWF tag team belts, you say, mate?" replied Bushwhacker Butch. "Me and Cousin Luke still feel like we're 20 years old! We're just startin' to have fun out there. The other day, Cousin Luke asked me if I thought it was time for us to start slowin' down a bit, but I told him I feel so young. He said he does, too. I don't know why he bothered to ask such a silly question, mate. We still get a kick out of wrestlin' those Bodydonnas. And that Sunny, she's quite a sight, mate. She don't like me and Luke much. I don't know why. We think we're real handsome. And those Godwinns, they're our kind of guys. They love to roll around in the dirt and all. It don't matter who has the belts. Me and cousin Luke still love our wrestling. We'll beat anybody!"

• • •

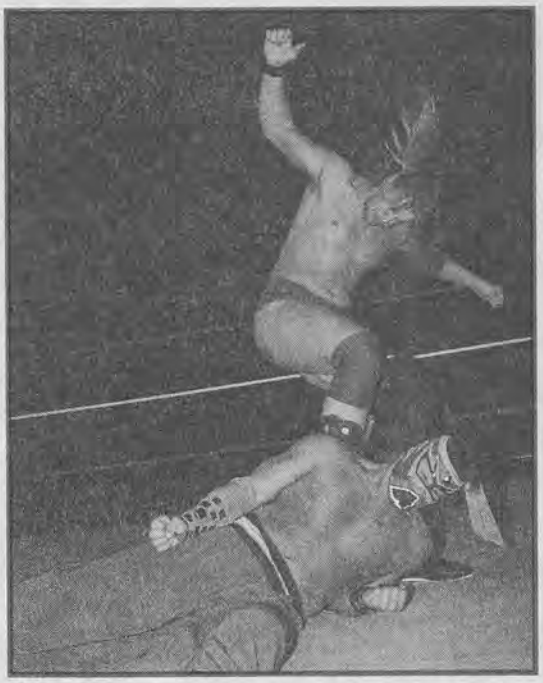
Q: "I have a question for Col. Robert Parker: Didn't your mother ever teach you that it's not right for you to hit a woman? I think you should be ashamed of yourself for wrestling with Madusa!" —Jenny Fields, Griffith Creek, TN

A: "That little filly Madusa is not a real woman there, Jenny," said Parker. "Just look at all the times she jumped me from behind and attacked me for no reason at all. She is downright despicable. I tell you, she has no class. Her momma and daddy must not have taught her any manners, because she don't know how to behave like a lady. I don't like fightin' her in the ring, but it's the only way I can teach her a lesson. You know, I pride myself on bein' a polite Southern gentleman, but this Madusa must be put in her place. You oughta be thankin' me for tryin' to straighten her out!"

• • •

Q: "This question is for Stan Hansen: Not long after Justin 'Hawk' Bradshaw started wrestling in the WWF, people started comparing him to you. What do you think of Bradshaw?" —Richard Dagmire, New Bedford, MA

A: "From what I seen of the guy, he's a pretty tough hombre," said Hansen. "But just because you're a tough Texan, that don't mean you're anywhere close to bein' in the class of Stan Hansen. That boy's got a long way to go before he can even talk about fillin' my shoes. I been in tough, bloody fights all over the world my whole life, and I'm still as tough as I ever been. Nobody likes gettin' into fights with me over here in Japan. If this Bradshaw thinks that just because he beat up a few nobodies in the WWF, that makes him the toughest hombre ever to come outta the great state of Texas, well, he better just get a grip on his ego. He's got some potential, but if he ever came up against me, I'd pound a lot of sense into his head." □



Justin Bradshaw stomps his way to a victory over Avatar. WWF broadcasters have compared him to Stan Hansen. Hansen, however, does not believe such comparisons are realistic.

A lot of fans might think The Bushwhackers are better comedians than wrestlers at this stage in their careers, but Luke and Butch say they still feel young and would like to make a run at the WWF tag title.

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[NOTE: Cover stories noted in boldface.]

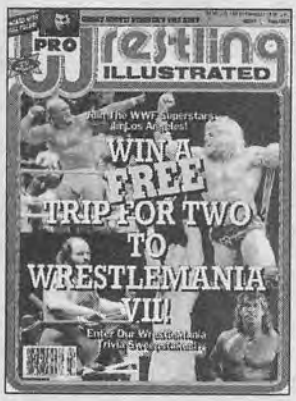
February 1988/CENTERFOLD: Ronnie Garvin. **Savage & Elizabeth,** Garvin, Von Erichs, Freebirds.

April 1989/CENTERFOLD: Rick Steiner. **Randy Savage,** Ted Turner, Richter, Paul E., Powers of Pain.

December 1990/CENTERFOLD: Sting. **New WWF Blood,** Four Horsemen, Kerry, Doom, Gilbert, Slaughter.

January 1991/CENTERFOLD: Kerry Von Erich. **WWF vs. NWA,** Hogan, Hansen, Sting, Sherri & Warrior.

February 1991/CENTERFOLD: 1991 calendar. **WrestleMania,** Vicious, DiBiase-Rhodes, Steiner, Power & Glory.



May 1991/CENTERFOLD: Arn Anderson. **Hulk Hogan,** Rude, Flair-Sting, Thesz.

June 1991/CENTERFOLD: Hacksaw Duggan. **Hulk Hogan,** Cactus, Flair, Nasty Boys, Steiner.

January 1993/CENTERFOLD: Jeff Jarrett. **Flair/Summerslam,** Simmons by Bowden, Von Erich interview.

February 1993/CENTERFOLD: Curt Hennig. **Ramon,** Snuka-Muraco, Rude, Rhodes, Roberts interview.

April 1993/CENTERFOLD: Barry Windham. **Steiners,** Backlund, Sting-Muta, Hawk-Sasaki.

November 1993/CENTERFOLD: The Steiners. **WCW Midyear Report,** Doink, Funk-Gilbert, Race, Yokozuna.

January 1994/CENTERFOLD: Jerry Lawler. **Doink,** Nasty Boys, Steiners, Cornette, Vicious.

May 1994/CENTERFOLD: Tatanka. **Yokozuna-Luger**, Flair-Vader, Heenan, WrestleMania retrospective.

July 1994/CENTERFOLD: Rick Steamboat. **Razor Ramon,** Flair-Regal, Cactus, Lawler, Yokozuna workout.

August 1994/CENTERFOLD: Doink & Dink. **Bret Hart/WrestleMania X,** Steriners, Albano, steroid trial.

November 1994/CENTERFOLD: Randy Savage. **Hogan In WCW,** Cactus, Yokozuna, Lawler, Michaels, Jake.

Winter 1994/CENTERFOLD: Terry Funk. **Hulkamania Wild Again,** McMahon, Vicious, AAA, Flair.

January 1995/CENTERFOLD: Razor Ramon. **Tatanka,** Hogan, Alundra, ECW vs. NWA, Brian Lee.

February 1995/CENTERFOLD: Johnny B. Badd. **WCW Civil War,** Pillman & Austin, Abdullah, Bret Hart.

April 1995/CENTERFOLD: Sabu. **WWF Title Turmoil,** Hogan, Cornette, Diesel, Alundra, Rhodes.

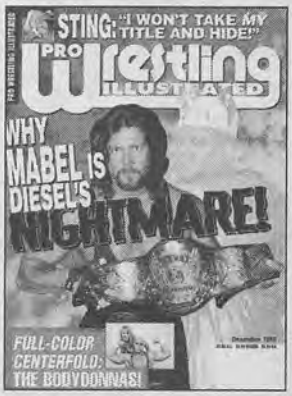
May 1995/CENTERFOLD: Sting. **Diesel,** Savage, Sabu, Hogan-Beefcake, Vader, Owen Hart.

July 1995/CENTERFOLD: Bam Bam Bigelow. **Hulk Hogan,** Sullivan, USWA blood, Yokozuna, revitalize the WWF.

August 1995/CENTERFOLD: Big Van Vader. **Women In Wrestling,** Rottens, Sting-Hogan, Road Warriors.

October 1995/CENTERFOLD: Harlem Heat. **Razor Ramon,** ideal WWF champ, Flair, Savage, Orndorff.

November 1995/CENTERFOLD: Hulk Hogan. **Summerslam,** Vader, Michaels, Backlund, North Korea, ECW rules.



December 1995/CENTERFOLD: Bodydonnas. **Diesel-Mabel,** Sting, Yokozuna, Savio, Regal-Eaton, Lawler-LeDuc.

January 1996/CENTERFOLD: Arn Anderson. **WWF vs. WCW,** Diesel & Shawn, Luger, Summerslam.

February 1996/CENTERFOLD: Shawn Michaels. **Randy Savage,** Hogan, Gangstas-Public Enemy, Austin.

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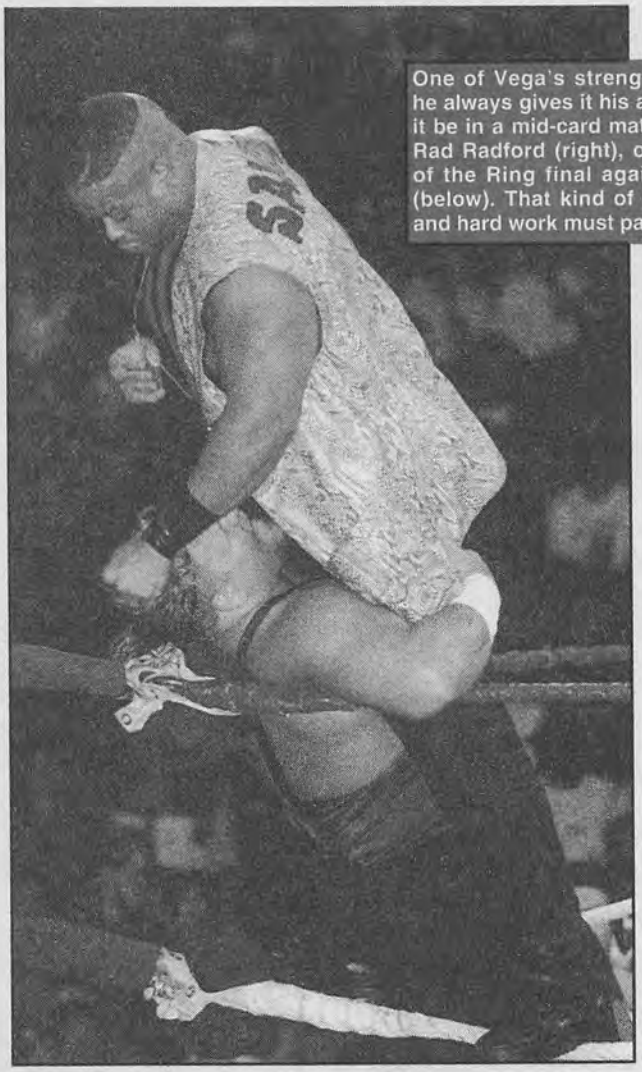
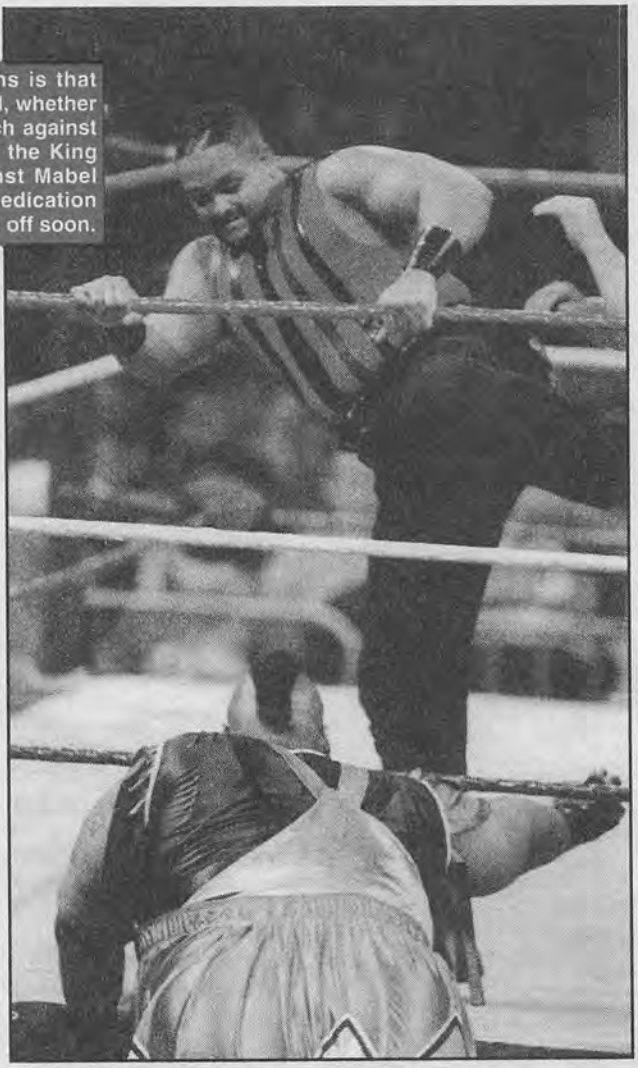
SAVIO

(Continued from page 49)





One of Vega's strengths is that he always gives it his all, whether it be in a mid-card match against Rad Radford (right), or the King of the Ring final against Mabel (below). That kind of dedication and hard work must pay off soon.

has proven his mettle against lesser opponents. He has proved to be a worthy adversary for Goldust, too. In fact the pair's March meeting at Madison Square Garden was billed by many, including this magazine, as the WWF's Match of the Year so far *(see page 40)*.

"Vega's popularity has risen dramatically over the last few months," noted Barry Horowitz. "His stock went up a lot since his matches with Goldust. He is not I-C champ for only one reason: He won't cheat the way Goldust does. He's just too good a guy to do that."

Ironically, by being such a good guy, Vega has become the target of the WWF's bad guys, namely The Kid, Goldust, and Jeff Jarrett. Notice a trend? All were nemeses of Ramon. But with Razor scheduled to leave the WWF, Vega represents the image of a new "Bad Guy." The Jarretts, Ramons, and Kids have been lining up in hopes of wreaking the same havoc upon Vega that they did upon Ramon.

"Funny how Savio Vega's road to a title runs parallel to the one walked by Ramon," said WWF expert Thomas Pilliard. "It's no coincidence that he will have to barge through these guys to get to the I-C title or maybe even the WWF title. Razor did, and so will Vega. Both men are cut out of the same mold, although they express their devotion to winning and to their ideals in different ways."

"I expect Vega to really take off if Ramon's not around anymore," said Bigelow. "If Razor is no longer casting his shadow on Savio, Savio can focus more on himself and his own career. He has a lot of pride. He always wants to be the best he can be *every night*. Having so much fire, desire, and motivation could lead the guy to a title real soon."

This chapter of the Savio Vega story is complete. In the next one, we should find the ever-smiling fan favorite wrapping a gold belt around his waist. This should be Savio's summer to remember. □

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July 1986/Stories include: King Kong Bundy, Koloff vs. Graham, Ric Flair.

December 1986/Stories include: Flair, Hogan, Bockwinkel, Gilbert, Nikita.

January 1987/Stories include: Heenan, Garvins, DiBiase, Borne & Sawyer.

May 1988/Stories include: Horsemen, Hogan, Flair, Fantastics, DiBiase.

February 1990/Stories include: Sting-Luger, Gordy, Martel, Hogan-Brown.

April 1990/Stories include: Hogan, Luger, Woman, Piper-Heenan, Travis.

June 1990/Stories include: Hogan, Rockers, Koloffs, Horsemen, Flair-Luger.

July 1990/Stories include: Poffo, Dusty-Savage, Luger-Flair, Doom, Blanchard.

September 1990/Stories include: Ultimate, Haynes, Luger, Doom, Tugboat.

October 1990/Stories include: Hogan-Earthquake, Ultimate, Flair, Rich.

November 1990/Stories include: Luger & Sting, Beefcake, Race, Steiners.

May 1991/Stories include: Hogan-Slaughter, Flair, Eaton, Sheik-Bobo.

June 1991/Stories include: Hogan, Nastys, Sting, Flair, Cactus Jack.

July 1991/Stories include: Flair-Fujinami, Nastys, Steiners, Savage.

August 1991/Stories include: Slaughter, Luger-Nikita, Hennig, Poffo.

September 1991/Stories include: Steiners vs. Sting & Luger, LOD, Cactus.

November 1991/Stories include: Luger, Steamboat, Piper, Global.

January 1992/Stories include: LOD, Badd, Hughes, Roberts, Gossett.

February 1992/Stories include: Flair, Simmons, Santana, Backlund.

May 1992/Stories include: Flair, Anderson & Eaton, Piper, Rhodes, USWA.

June 1992/Stories include: Flair-Hogan-Justice, Gilbert, Warrior, Vegas.

August 1992/Stories include: Warrior, Bunkhouse, Undertaker-Roberts, Sting.

October 1992/Stories include: Bulldog & Warrior, Lee, Martel-Tatanka, Austin.

November 1992/Stories include: Crush, Reed, Hennig, Sting, Rogers.

April 1993/Stories include: What's in/out, Ramon, Steamboat, Patriot, Tatanka.

June 1993/Stories include: Sting-Vader, Doink & Christopher, Steiners, Lawler.

July 1993/Stories include: Smith-Vader, Ramon, Rhodes, Tatanka, Bravo murder.

November 1993/Stories include: Rude-Flair, Hogan, Luger, Jannetty, Bodies.

December 1993/Stories include: Luger, Sting & Flair, Fytch, Luna, Austin.

January 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Rude-Flair, Bagwell & Scorpio, Cornette.

February 1994/Stories include: Vicious & Arn, Yokozuna, Vader-Cactus, steroids.

April 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Savage-Crush, Flair, Blayze, Adams, Boss.

May 1994/Stories include: Royal Rumble, Hulk minus bulk, Boss, Douglas-Sherri.

July 1994/Stories include: Flair-Hogan, DiBiase, Crockett, Douglas, WWF.

August 1994/Stories include: Cactus-Vader, MOM, Hart & Yokozuna, Badd.

October 1994/Stories include: Undertaker, Cactus, Scorpio-Sabu, Funk, Sheik.

November 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Owen, Bret, Badd, Lawler.

December 1994/Stories include: Hogan, Luger, Vicious, Austin, Bomb.

January 1995/Stories include: Holiday gifts, DiBiase, Badd, Backlund, PG-13.

February 1995/Stories include: Hogan, Steiners, Undertaker, Sabu, Honky Tonk.

April 1995/Stories include: Harlem Heat, Lawler-Cornette, Beefcake, What If...?

May 1995/Stories include: Sting-Savage, Jarrett, Flair, Douglas-Blanchard.

July 1995/Stories include: Hogan, Jannetty, Pillman, LT, Dundee.

August 1995/Stories include: Diesel, LT, Hogan, powerful people, Gargoyle.

October 1995/Stories include: Backlund, Steiners, Austin & Pillman, Miss Texas.

November 1995/Stories include: Flair-Savage, Mabel, Jarrett-Ramon, Renegade.

Winter 1995/Stories include: Sting-Hogan, Steiners, Yankem, Bodies, Arn.

January 1996/Stories include: Hogan, Douglas, anniversary review of 30 years.

February 1996/Stories include: Hart, Luger, WCW, Cactus, Horowitz.

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Sting & Luger v

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HOW THEIR

SURVIVED THE

At Super Brawl '91, Rick and Scott Steiner went at it hard and rough against Sting and Lex Luger. For a time, it seemed their solid relationships were on shaky ground. Then Nikita Koloff got into the act and, with one vicious swing, saved a four-way friendship

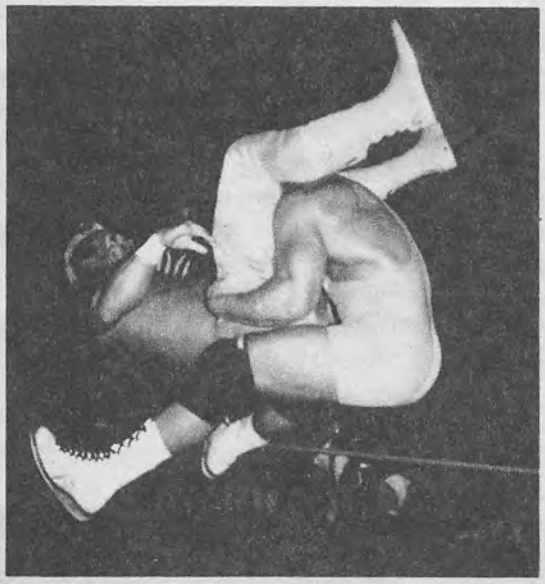
Sting and Lex Luger had their moments of domination over the WCW World tag team champions, as Sting gets Rick Steiner in a backbreaker (top left), Luger blasts Rick with a clothesline (above), and Sting leaps at Rick over the top rope (right).

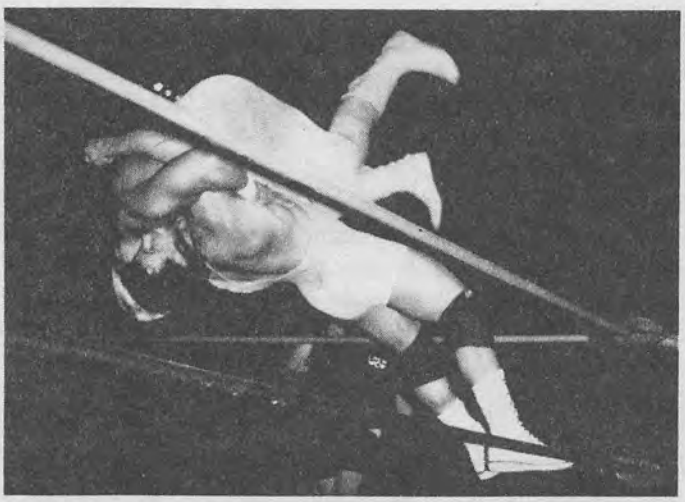
Photos by Bill Apter

MATCH OF

s. The Steiners:

FRIENDSHIPS MOST BRUTAL





Scott Steiner drops the "Stinger" on his back (left) and suplexes him off the second turnbuckle (above). These men went at it like bitter enemies.

By Kostya Kennedy

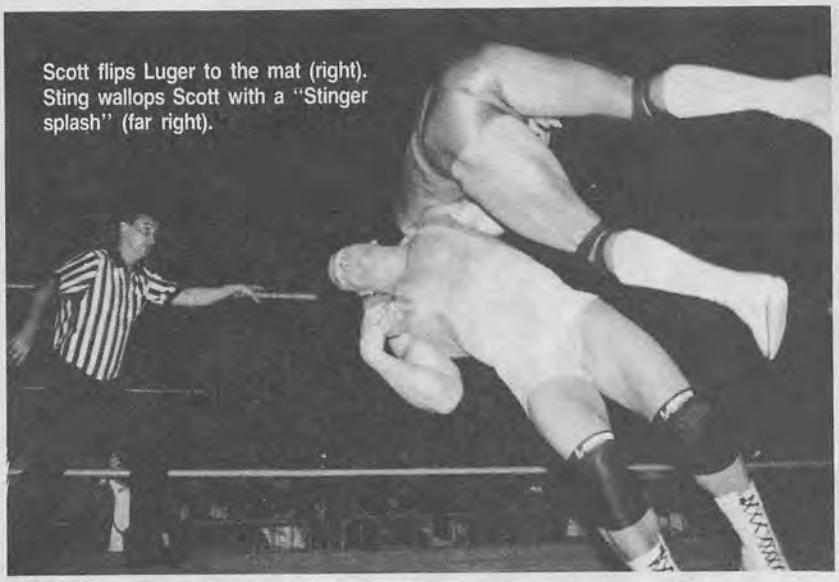
THE BATTLE WAS so fierce and so intense, it didn't seem *any* relationship could bridge the gap between the two fighting sides. Four men—four friends—were involved in a grueling tag team match that appeared destined to ruin four friendships simutaneously.

When Rick and Scott Steiner shook hands with Sting and Lex Luger prior to their tag team bout at Super Brawl '91, fans might have worried that the respect and good feelings between the teams would dampen the intensity of the match. No way.

From the opening bell, these teams went at it with a vengence. Four of the most talented wrestlers in the world were displaying the best they had to give, and no one was holding back.

"Wow, that was some match," said Dustin Rhodes, who pinned Terrence Taylor earlier on the card. "I felt like a little kid when I was watching it. I wasn't really rooting for either team, I just wanted to see some great wres-

THE YEAR



Scott flips Luger to the mat (right). Sting wallops Scott with a "Stinger splash" (far right).

tling, and I sure wasn't disappointed. The fan in me totally came out; that match reminded me of why I love wrestling in the first place."

Indeed, most of these athletes' finer points were on display. Each team flaunted its scientific knowhow and stunned onlookers with power moves. Clotheslines from the ropes, stunning suplex variations, lightning-fast leg sweeps—all that, and much, much more. At one point late in the match, Sting actually reversed Scott's piledriver attempt to deliver one of his own! Things were getting decidely rough, and the heat was on both teams.

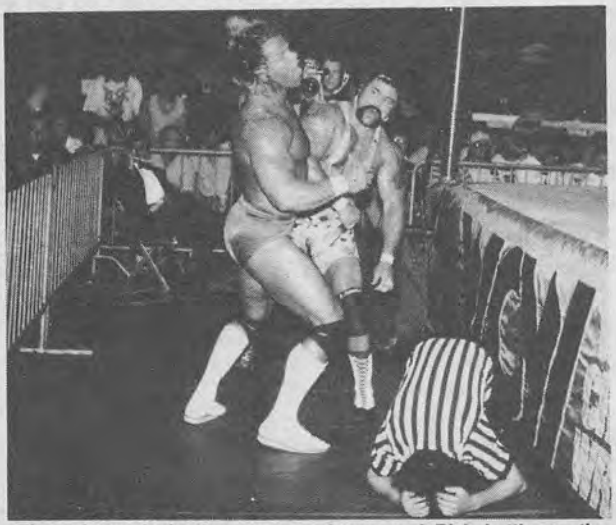
Then, suddenly, chaos broke out. Sting was overpowering Scott when Rick ran entered the ring to stop a pin count. As referee Randy Anderson directed Rick out of the ring, Luger charged in, knocking Anderson and Rick off the apron. As Lex and Rick began fighting at ringside, Sting tamed Scott with the "Stinger splash" inside the ring, then clamped on the "Scorpion deathlock."

Surely this meant the end of the respective friendships among these wrestlers. A man can take only so much punishment from a friend before the relationship cracks from the strain. Fights among buddies or brothers are hardly unusual, but this was no fight. This was a war.

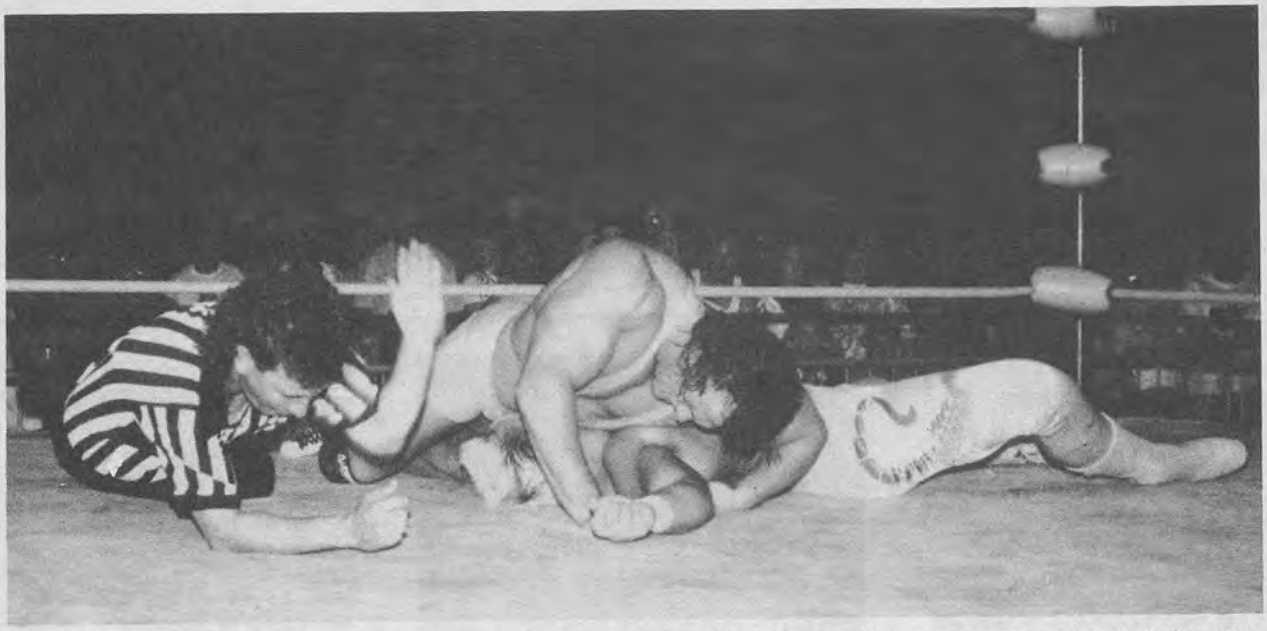
"I was always impressed at how some wrestlers are able to go at it so hard and still maintain a friendship when the match is over," said Bobby Reynolds, a Super Brawl ringsider. "I remember when Ultimate Warrior pinned Hulk Hogan. That was such a ferocious match, but when it was over Hogan was right there holding up Warrior's arm in triumph.

"But this was an even fiercer match. I mean, Rick and Luger were wailing on each other non-stop, and Sting and Scott didn't seem to care about hurting one another. I was sure they would be enemies when the final bell rang!"

That may well have been the case, if not for Nikita Koloff. That's right, the dastardly, devilish Koloff, known for creating rifts and tensions wherever he goes, was personally responsible for saving a four-way fan favorite



The referee ducks for cover as Luger and Rick battle on the arena floor (above). Nikita Koloff interferes, hitting Sting in the face with his chain (right).



friendship!

Luger had returned to the apron when Koloff raced out of the locker room bearing a chain. He headed toward Luger, but an alert Sting pushed his teammate out of the way, thereby absorbing the full impact of Koloff's chain with his own face. Bloodied, Sting fell to the mat. Scott was woozy, but he managed to crawl on top of Sting for the pin.

Yet when it was over, the Steiners hardly rejoiced in victory. The main concern was for Sting and the painful, underhanded blow he had been dealt.

"We're not about to give back the victory or anything," Scott said, "but I do feel bad that it had to happen the way it did. I'm just glad Sting wasn't seriously hurt. He's a great wrestler and a great man. Koloff's actions were totally unfair and totally uncalled for."

"It's hard enough to go up against a team like the Steiners without having Koloff get in the way," said Sting, who brawled with Koloff in the Bayfront Center's outer corridor after match. "I like to think we would have won if it wasn't for Koloff. The Steiners sure know what they're doing, though. I felt like we were taking on an army in there."

But suppose Koloff *hadn't* stepped in. Suppose Sting and Scott had continued to beat each other to a pulp. Suppose Lex and Rick had rekindled their skirmish outside the ropes. Would these teams still speak so well of one another? Or would their relationships have been shattered by the force of so many blows?

Scott covers Sting for the pin (above), ending this incredible encounter. In the locker room, Luger assesses the damage done to his friend (below).

"It was getting ugly in there, there's no doubt about it," Luger said. "I don't know how far things would have gone, but we were all pretty into it. I don't know. If it had gone any further, maybe our friendships *would* have suffered."

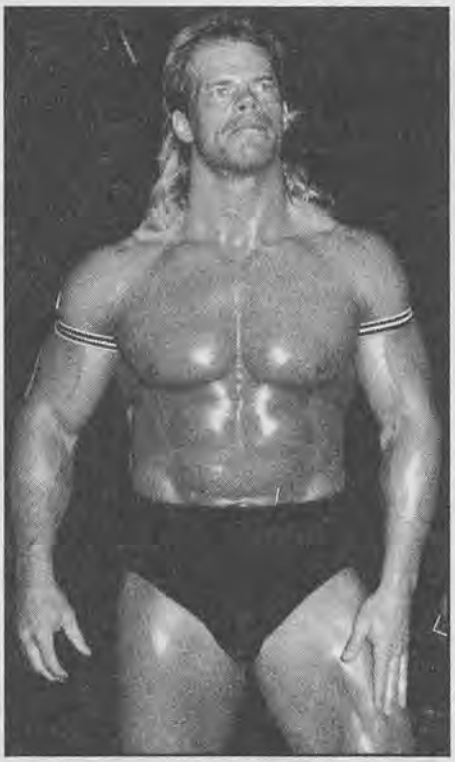
Instead, these four continue to form a nucleus of goodwill at the forefront of the WCW tag team title picture. And the incredible thing is that the man responsible for keeping those friendships intact is Nikita Koloff.

This bad guy did good, even though he didn't mean it. □

The Wrestler

TOP 10

1. **SHAWN MICHAELS**
   234, San Antonio, TX
   (1) WWF World champion
2. **THE GIANT**
   430, parts unknown
   (2) WCW World champion
3. **STING**
   260, Venice Beach, CA
   (5) No. 2 contender: WCW World title
4. **THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR**
   273, Scottsdale, AZ
   (9) No. 3 contender: WWF World title
5. **KONNAN**
   237, Mexico City, Mexico
   (-) U.S. heavyweight champion
6. **BIG VAN VADER**
   450, Denver, CO
   (-) No. 6 contender: WWF World title
7. **JEFF JARRETT**
   230, Nashville, TN
   (8) USWA heavyweight champion
8. **LEX LUGER**
   265, Chicago, IL
   (4) WCW TV champion
9. **THE UNDERTAKER**
   328, parts unknown
   (3) No. 4 contender: WWF World title
10. **JERRY LAWLER**
    234, Memphis, TN
    (-) USWA Southern champion



Lex Luger

TAG TEAMS

1. **HENRY & PHINEAS GODWINN**
   Combined weight: 531 pounds
   (4) WWF World tag team champions
2. **LEX LUGER & STING**
   Combined weight: 525 pounds
   (2) WCW World tag team champions
3. **SKIP & ZIP**
   Combined weight: 446 pounds
   (1) No. 1 contenders: WWF World tag title
4. **THE ROAD WARRIORS**
   Combined weight: 560 pounds
   (5) No. 1 contenders: WCW World tag title
5. **RICK & SCOTT STEINER**
   Combined weight: 483 pounds
   (3) No. 2 contenders: WCW World tag title
6. **THE BUSHWHACKERS**
   Combined weight: 499 pounds
   (-) No. 2 contenders: WWF World tag title
7. **BILL DUNDEE & JERRY LAWLER**
   Combined weight: 453 pounds
   (-) USWA tag team champions
8. **THE NASTY BOYS**
   Combined weight: 585 pounds
   (7) No. 3 contenders: WCW World tag title
9. **THE ELIMINATORS**
   Combined weight: 459 pounds
   (8) ECW tag team champions
10. **THE CYBERPUNKS**
    Combined weight: 471 pounds
    (9) No. 1 contenders: USWA tag title

WCW

World Champion:
THE GIANT
(C) 430, parts unknown

1—KONNAN
(1) 237, Mexico City, Mexico
2—STING
(2) 260, Venice Beach, CA
3—LEX LUGER
(3) 265, Chicago, IL
4—RANDY SAVAGE
(6) 237, Sarasota, FL
5—DEAN MALENKO
(-) 216, Tampa, FL
6—RIC FLAIR
(5) 243, Minneapolis, MN
7—EDDY GUERRERO
(-) 221, Los Angeles, CA
8—ARN ANDERSON
(9) 249, Minneapolis, MN
9—CHRIS BENOIT
(8) 218, Edmonton, Alberta
10—DIAMOND DALLAS PAGE
(-) 260, Tampa, FL

WWF

World Champion:
SHAWN MICHAELS
(C) 234, San Antonio, TX

1—GOLDUST
(1) 254, Austin, TX
2—DAVEY BOY SMITH
(10) 245, Leeds, England
3—THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR
(6) 273, Scottsdale, AZ
4—THE UNDERTAKER
(2) 328, parts unknown
5—DIESEL
(9) 356, Las Vegas, NV
6—BIG VAN VADER
(5) 450, Denver, CO
7—AHMED JOHNSON
(7) 255, Pearl River, MS
8—SAVIO VEGA
(8) 260, Vega Alta, Puerto Rico
9—HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY
(-) 279, Greenwich, CT
10—STEVE AUSTIN
(3) 241, Dallas, TX

USWA

USWA Champion:
JEFF JARRETT
(C) 230, Nashville, TN

1—JERRY LAWLER
(2) 234, Memphis, TN
2—MABEL
(1) 568, Harlem, NY
3—JESSE JAMES ARMSTRONG
(5) 240, Marietta, GA
4—BILL DUNDEE
(3) 219, Melbourne, Australia
5—BRIAN CHRISTOPHER
(4) 230, Memphis, TN
6—TONY FALK
(-) 240, Dallas, TX
7—MO
(9) 285, Harlem, NY
8—DOUG GILBERT
(-) 241, Lexington, TN
9—CYBERPUNK FIRE
(7) 221, parts unknown
10—REGGIE B. FINE
(10) 215, Memphis, TN

ECW

ECW Champion:
RAVEN
(C) 235, Short Hills, NJ

1—SHANE DOUGLAS
(2) 223, Pittsburgh, PA
2—CHRIS JERICHO
(-) 225, Vancouver, British Columb
3—TAZ
(6) 221, Red Hook, NY
4—2 COLD SCORPIO
(1) 222, Denver, CO
5—BRIAN LEE
(8) 251, Los Angeles, CA
6—TOMMY DREAMER
(5) 245, Yonkers, NY
7—THE SANDMAN
(4) 244, Philadelphia, PA
8—SABU
(3) 220, Bombay
9—MIKEY WHIPWRECK
(10) 187, New York, NY
10—ROB VAN DAM
(9) 227, Battle Creek, MI

OFFICIAL RATINGS

Top 10 and Tag Team ratings are based on won-lost records for the past month, quality of opposition, and inherent skill of each wrestler or team. These ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board. Most Popular and Most Hated ratings are based on nationwide telephone and arena surveys of wrestling fans and on the volume and character of mail that comes to our offices. All other ratings are based on the official current positions of challengers to the top title in each category; certain titleholders receive an automatic spot in the ratings. The number in parentheses indicates a wrestler's position in that category last issue; (-) indicates that the wrestler was not rated in that category last issue. while (C) indicates the wrestler was champion in that category last issue.

For period ended May 21, 1996

MOST POPULAR

1. **SHAWN MICHAELS**
   234, San Antonio, TX
   Last issue: No. 3 Most Popular
2. **STING**
   260, Venice Beach, CA
   Last issue: No. 2 Most Popular
3. **THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR**
   273, Scottsdale, AZ
   Last issue: No. 1 Most Popular
4. **THE UNDERTAKER**
   328, parts unknown
   Last issue: No. 4 Most Popular
5. **RANDY SAVAGE**
   237, Sarasota, FL
   Last issue: No. 9 Most Popular
6. **AHMED JOHNSON**
   255, Pearl River, MS
   Last issue: No. 8 Most Popular
7. **LEX LUGER**
   265, Chicago, IL
   Last issue: No. 7 Most Popular
8. **SAVIO VEGA**
   260, Vega Alta, Puerto Rico
   Last issue: No. 6 Most Popular
9. **YOKOZUNA**
   589, Samoa
   Last issue: unrated
10. **TOMMY DREAMER**
    245, Yonkers, NY
    Last issue: No. 10 Most Popular

MOST HATED

1. **THE GIANT**
   430, parts unknown
   Last issue: No. 7 Most Hated
2. **GOLDUST**
   254, Austin, TX
   Last issue: No. 1 Most Hated
3. **DAVEY BOY SMITH**
   245, Leeds, England
   Last issue: unrated
4. **BIG VAN VADER**
   450, Denver, CO
   Last issue: No. 3 Most Hated
5. **RIC FLAIR**
   243, Minneapolis, MN
   Last issue: No. 2 Most Hated
6. **JERRY LAWLER**
   234, Memphis, TN
   Last issue: No. 6 Most Hated
7. **KEVIN SULLIVAN**
   252, Boston, MA
   Last issue: No. 4 Most Hated
8. **JEFF JARRETT**
   230, Nashville, TN
   Last issue: No. 8 Most Hated
9. **HUNTER HEARST HELMSLEY**
   279, Greenwich, CT
   Last issue: unrated
10. **ARN ANDERSON**
    249, Minneapolis, MN
    Last issue: No. 9 Most Hated

CUMULATIVE RATINGS

These ratings are based on the past 10 issues of this magazine. We have examined our ratings for each of these issues in our Top 10 and Tag Team categories only, and assigned each position a point value: 10 points for a first-place rating, nine for second place, and so on. The point values for all wrestlers in the past 10 issues have been compiled, with a possible maximum of 100 points. Each issue we'll present the top five finishers in each category. While our regular ratings reflect the past month, these cumulative ratings give an indication of wider trends in the sport.

SINGLES

1—BRET HART ..... 64 points
2—STING ..... 57 points
3—SHAWN MICHAELS ..... 54 points
4—HULK HOGAN ..... 51 points
5—THE UNDERTAKER ..... 49 points

TAG TEAMS

1—HARLEM HEAT ..... 57 points
2—THE SMOKIN' GUNNS ..... 57 points
3—SKIP & ZIP ..... 50 points
4—LEX LUGER & STING ..... 47 points
5—OWEN HART & YOKOZUNA ..... 37 points

NEW JAPAN

IWGP Champion:
SHINYA HASHIMOTO
(4) 287, Gisu, Japan

1—**NOBUHIKO TAKADA**
(C) 231, Yokohama, Japan
2—**GREAT SASUKE**
(-) 212, Tokyo, Japan
3—**JUSHIN LIGER**
(3) 206, Hiroshima, Japan
4—**THE GREAT MUTA**
(1) 245, Tokyo, Japan
5—**HAKUSHI**
(-) 231, Tokyo, Japan
6—**MASA CHONO**
(9) 235, Tokyo, Japan
7—**GENICHIRO TENRYU**
(-) 235, Tokyo, Japan
8—**HIROYOSHI TENZAN**
(-) 270, Tokyo, Japan
9—**RIKI CHOSHU**
(-) 246, Yamaguchi, Japan
10—**SHINJIRO OTANI**
(2) 215, Yokohama, Japan

ALL-JAPAN

Triple Crown Champion:
MITSUHARU MISAWA
(C) 228, Saitama, Japan

1—**TOSHIAKI KAWADA**
(1) 245, Tizhigi, Japan
2—**AKIRA TAUE**
(7) 265, Tokyo, Japan
3—**JOHNNY ACE**
(3) 250, San Bernadino, CA
4—**STAN HANSEN**
(4) 322, Borger, TX
5—**KENTA KOBASHI**
(5) 261, Tokyo, Japan
6—**STEVE WILLIAMS**
(2) 265, Norman, OK
7—**THE PATRIOT**
(6) 251, Columbia, SC
8—**GARY ALBRIGHT**
(8) 343, Billings, MT
9—**YOSHINARI OGAWA**
(9) 202, Fichigi, Japan
10—**DOUG FURNAS**
(10) 243, Commerce, OK

AAA: AAA Champion—Konnan; 1—Perro Aguayo; 2—Psicosis; 3—Octagon; 4—Juventud Guerrera; 5—Rey Misterio Jr.; 6—La Parka; 7—Pierroth Jr.; 8—Cien Caras; 9—Jerry Estrada; 10—Zibernetico.

ACW: ACW Champion—T. Rantula; 1—Johnny Gunn; 2—Rick Martel; 3—Tito Santana; 4—Mr. Hughes; 5—Johnny Graham; 6—Frank Stalletto; 7—Lord Zoltan; 8—Glen Osbourne; 9—Race Richards III; 10—Reckless Youth.

IWCCW: IWCCW Champion—Greg Valentine; 1—Rick Martel; 2—Tito Santana; 3—Scott Putski; 4—Tony Atlas; 5—Johnny Gunn; 6—Metal Maniac; 7—Bastion Booger; 8—Jimmy Snuka; 9—Koko B. Ware; 10—Joe Savoldi.

MTW: MTW Champion—Title Vacant; 1—Bruiser Bedlam; 2—Rock Stevens; 3—Machine Gun Kelly; 4—D-Lo Brown; 5—Chris Carter; 6—J.T. Lightning; 7—Brad Armstrong; 8—Bobo Brazil Jr.; 9—Ray Roberts; 10—Johnny Paradise.

PCW: PCW Champion—Mark Mest; 1—Akita Kaos; 2—Johnny Graham; 3—Maxx Crimson; 4—Reckless Youth; 5—Primo Carnera III; 6—Ray Odyssey; 7—Jimmy Deo; 8—King Kong Bundy; 9—Ace Darling; 10—Doink the Clown.

PWA: PWA Champion—The Hater; 1—Lenny Lane; 2—Kamikaze Kid; 3—J.B. Trask; 4—Horace the Psychopath; 5—Dan Jesser; 6—Blacktop Bully; 7—Nailz; 8—The Mangler; 9—The Nightstalker; 10—Kenny Jay.

PWF: PWF Champion—Carolina Dreamer; 1—George South; 2—Italian Stallion; 3—Flaming Youth; 4—Gladiator II; 5—Star Ryder; 6—Terry Austin; 7—Austin Steele; 8—Russian Assassin II; 9—Baby Huey; 10—Cruel Connection II.

WWA: WWA Champion—Jim McPherson; 1—Stryker; 2—Ubas; 3—Xanta Klaus; 4—Chuck Sloan; 5—John Rotten; 6—Chris Evans; 7—Frank Finnegan; 8—Metal Maniac; 9—Gino Caruso; 10—Ed Atlas.

Ratings . . . . ANALYSIS

A Giant step forward. As you almost certainly know by now, **The Giant** is the new WCW World heavyweight champion. He won the belt with a clean victory over **Ric Flair** on April 22. What was perhaps most impressive about the victory was not the crunching choke-slam he used to finish off the "Nature Boy," but rather how unaffected and unfazed he was by Flair's figure-four leglock.

Ric Flair

Many in WCW have figured out how to reverse the hold, but Giant didn't need to do that. He simply sat up as Flair applied the hold, grabbed Flair by the neck, and forced to him to release the hold. He made it look easy. One choke-slam later, Flair's 12th world heavyweight title reign was over. The victory, of course, pushed The Giant high up in our overall top 10 ... but not quite to the very top.

We understand that the victory over Flair was impressive, especially since The Giant is still a rookie (the first rookie ever to win a world heavyweight title), but we're not ready to rank him above **Shawn Michaels** yet. Giant's first few title defenses came against **Hacksaw Duggan**, **Marcus Bagwell**, and **Lex Luger**, and though those three men are all very skilled, Michaels has been defending the WWF World title against the likes of **Diesel**, **Steve Austin**, and **Davey Boy Smith**.

This, however, could change very soon. At press time, The Giant had a series of matches with **Sting** scheduled, and you just know that he and **Hulk Hogan** haven't squared off in the ring for the last time. If The Giant can finally get a pinfall victory over Hogan and if he adds a few more convincing wins over Sting to his record, we might have to give him the number-one spot overall.

But another related issue we feel we must deal with concerns Mr. Flair. We have asked the question before: Was this Flair's last world title reign? There's no doubt that the man still has a wealth of talent, but the truth of the matter is that the "Nature Boy" was not exactly dominant in that last WCW title reign. He relied on the interference of **Arn Anderson**, **Woman**, and **Elizabeth** to win most of his matches and lost many others by disqualification.

We think he has a lot to prove now that he is an ex-champion again. Until he comes up with some significant victories that don't require outside interference, we will not include him in our overall top 10.

The Ultimate disappointment? Unlike Flair, **The Ultimate Warrior** does make an appearance in the top 10 this issue, but we still think he has something to prove, too. He has been beating every opponent the WWF has put in front of him since he made his celebrated return at WrestleMania XII, but he came up a bit short in his bids to win the Intercontinental belt from the bizarre **Goldust**. The first two times the two men wrestled each other, Warrior won by countout when Goldust simply fled the ring.

Goldust

You can't fault Warrior in those instances, but you can question his judgment in his match with Goldust at In Your House VII on April 28. After burning the I-C champ with the lit cigar of Goldust's "director," **Marlena**, Warrior clotheslined him over the top rope and settled for another win by countout. He had to know at the time that Goldust had an injured leg and was vulnerable. He probably should have kept him in the ring and gone for the pinfall. Unfortunately for Warrior, WWF President **Gorilla Monsoon** did not order an immediate rematch afterward.

If Warrior intends to remain in the top 10 and win either the World or Intercontinental title again, he'll need to come up with some better battle plans. Chances are, though, that he'll be getting more title shots soon. Fans want to see him wrestling for titles, and he is still winning consistently. On the other hand, there are a lot of young WWF wrestlers who would love to make a name for themselves by knocking off the Warrior. He had better be careful and be focused when he wrestles them.

That's it for this month! **If you have any questions or comments relating to our ratings or what you see on this page, we want to hear them. Write to: "Ratings Analysis," c/o THE WRESTLER, Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.**

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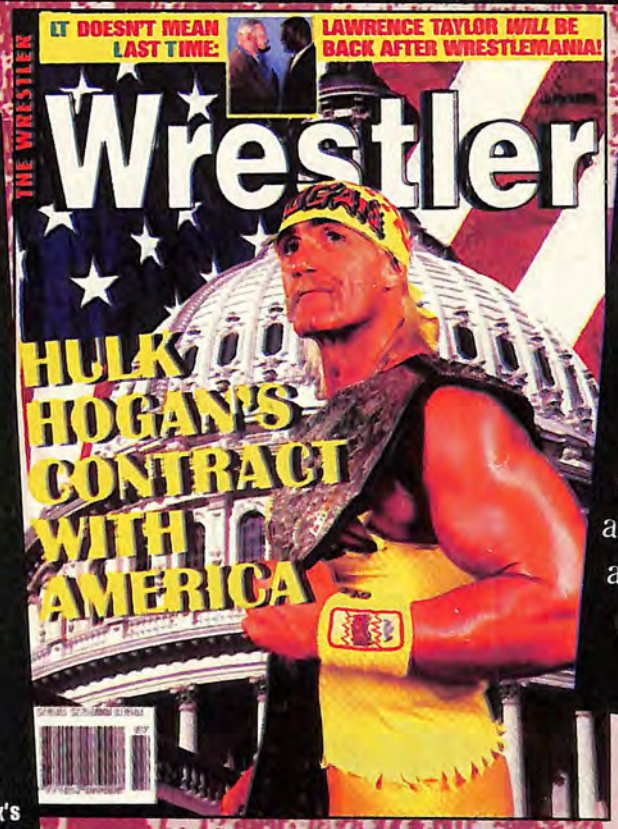

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